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February 27, 1894.

No. 866.

\$2.50
a Year.

PUBLISHED WEEKLY BY BEADLE AND ADAMS.
No. 98 WILLIAM STREET, NEW YORK.

Price,
5 cents.

Vol. XXXIV.

SPOTTER BOB'S BOWERY RACKET.

BY WILLIAM G. PATTEN.



"IF YOU TOUCH HER YOU WILL HAVE TO KILL ME FIRST," BURST FROM THE OLD MAN'S LIPS.

Spotter Bob's Bowery Racket;

OR,

Euchering the Man from Mexico.

BY WILLIAM G. PATTEN,

AUTHOR OF "SPOTTER BOB IN NEW YORK,"
"NOBBY NAT," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

BOB SCENTS CROOKEDNESS.

"Oh, the Bowery, the Bowery—
I'll never go there any more."

A bright, clean, fairly well-dressed boy of sixteen or seventeen lightly sung the words of the well-worn topical song, as he strolled idly up the Bowery from Chatham Square, laughing good-naturedly whenever he was jostled by any of the hurrying throng on the crowded walk.

He seemed absolutely at peace with himself and all the world, and it was evidently a difficult matter to ruffle his temper on this bright spring morning.

He had reached Hester street when a quickly-moving man ran into him fairly and squarely.

"Pardon, mister," cheerfully nodded the lad. "Room is limited on this highway 'bout this time a day."

The man uttered a snarl and spoke some words in a foreign language. He was slightly below medium height, with the dark face of a Spaniard or Italian, while his mustache and imperial, coal black in color, were waxed to needle-points.

"Get out de vay, leetle whelp!" he cried, glaring at the boy.

But, the lad was not at all alarmed.

"Don't get gay and call names, colonel!" was his retort. "It doesn't sound pretty, and I don't like it."

"You don't like eet, ha?" glowered the dark-faced man, who seemed in a mood to be angered at the slightest thing. "Den see how you like *dat*!"

As he uttered the words, he struck suddenly at the boy's face with his open hand.

Smack! The blow sent the lad reeling, but did not knock him over, for he was very light and quick on his feet. Gathering himself like a cat, he darted forward, as the foreigner was about to walk onward.

"Look here, you shadow-mug of darkness!" he cried, all the merriment having vanished from his face in an instant. "What do you mean by strikin' a feller in that way? It was a dirty trick!"

"Dirtee trick?" echoed the man, surprised and still more angered. "You say *dat* to me! An' I am Senor Felipe Murella, of Mexico! I haf you arrest!"

"Arrest an be—*jigged*! If I was a man, I'd knock about eight or a dozen corners off *you*! As I'm a kid, I s'pose you think you can swipe me with impunity—and that nasty paw of yours. But, boys get square sometimes, and the time may come when I'll even up this deal with you. Mark that down in your memorandy, Mister Mexicaner!"

"*Carajo*! You talk to me like *dat*! I gif you anoder!"

"No you don't!"

As the furious man struck at the lad, the latter slipped under his arm.

Then a surprising thing happened.

The boy gave a sweeping kick at the foreigner's feet, and, a moment later, he of the waxed mustache and new clothes—for the man was well dressed—lay sprawling in the street!

"Score one for Bob Braddock!" laughed the nimble youngster, as he skipped lightly away, and mingled with the shifting crowd.

Snarling, almost frothing at the mouth, the overthrown man arose to his feet, looking all around for the one who tripped him, and feeling toward his hip-pocket at the same

time, with a movement that seemed involuntary, but was significant of his true character.

The furious words that fell from his lips were spoken in Spanish, and his name indicated he was a Spaniard. That he was a man who habitually carried concealed weapons could be told by that one move of the hand toward the hip-pocket.

"Leetle dog-a!" he grated. "He geet away! Eef I evar see heem again, I geef him somet'ing vo'se than slap! I geef heem—"

He did not say what, but, drawing a snowy handkerchief from his pocket, brushed some of the dust from his clothes, at the same time hurrying from the spot, conscious that his overthrow had attracted the notice of many pedestrians, some of whom were smiling in a manner that made him grind his teeth.

The boy had not gone very far. From a doorway, he was watching every move of Senor Felipe Murella, of Mexico, and, when the Spaniard continued onward down the Bowery, the little street scout did not hesitate to follow him.

"That duffer's crooked," muttered the boy, to himself. "I know it by his looks. He's got an eye for nasty business, an' I don't s'pose he'd hesitate a jiff about cuttin' a feller's jubilee vein, if he took a notion."

"I'm goin' to shadow Mr. Seengaw Feeleep Mur-r-ella a bit, or I ain't Business Bob, the hustler from Philadelfy. We may be slow over in our town, but we don't let mokes of that sort tread on our coat-tails an' go away to brag about it—not to any large extent!"

The indolent, careless air had vanished from the boy, and he was now alert and ready for anything that might turn up. That he was unusually bright and active was apparent, and that he knew his business when he undertook to shadow a man was equally plain, for he did so with the skill of a veteran police ferret.

Twice the Spaniard paused and turned back quickly, as if his anger tempted him to return and seek for the lad, but, both times, Business Bob anticipated his movements and sought the shelter of open doorways, so he was not seen by Murella.

At length, the Man from Mexico halted at the corner of Canal street and seemed to be waiting for something or somebody. He took a little square of light paper and some tobacco from a pocket, and, in a few seconds, deftly rolled a cigarette. This he lighted, smoking as he waited.

The young Spotter, took a fancy to get as near the dark-faced foreigner as possible, and so, falling in behind a portly German, he kept his body concealed until close to a saloon doorway at the very corner.

Into the doorway darted the boy, from which cover he peered forth. To his surprise, the Spaniard turned and came slowly and deliberately toward the door!

"Great ginger!" gasped the lad. "He saw me!"

But, this did not prove to be true, for the Man from Mexico paused about five feet away, continuing to smoke, while he muttered something to himself now and then, speaking in a tone which convinced the young shadower that the Mexican was far from pleased about something that seemed to worry him.

At length, a strange character crossed the Bowery and approached the waiting man.

It was a person even smaller in stature than the Spaniard, who was but little below medium height. This individual was dressed in a manner calculated to attract attention in any Eastern place, for his garments were of *white buckskin*, fringed and beaded, somewhat soiled in places, and decorated with silver buttons. He wore a wide-brimmed hat, and his hair hung down to his shoulders. His face was clean shaven save

a reddish mustache, which was heavy and drooping—altogether too heavy for the man who carried it about. His eyes were small and restless, and the general cast of his features was not pleasant. He had the air and swagger of a desperado.

Felipe Murella muttered a Spanish imprecation when his eyes fell on the man who was so leisurely advancing toward him. As the Westerner came up, the Spaniard snapped:

"Why don't you keep your appointments? I have been waiting you von half hour! You are—"

"Hold hard, pard! Stop right thar!" cut in the man in buckskin, with an authoritative motion of his hand. "Don't git on yer high hoss an' try ter ride rough with Sonora Dan. I made the raffle jest as soon as I could git ther run of ther twisted trails of this yar town. 'Tain't like an open perary, not by a he-old heap!"

Murella said something in Spanish.

"Now, don't go to shootin' Mexican gab at me, Senor Felipe," advised the Westerner. "I kin understand it when it's dealt out in small chunks an' mighty slow, but I'm blowed ef I take a fancy to it any too much! You kin warble middlin' good United States, an' that'll do fer *my* style."

"Vell, I s'pose you come to talk beesnez?"

"Dead right, old side-pard!"

"V'at you vant?"

"Rocks."

"You vant money?"

"Bet yer boots!"

"I owe you nevar one cent more!" protested the Spaniard. "I pay you well in full for all you do. Why you come to me again?"

"This is for the final settlement, Senor Felipe?"

"De final settlement, ha? What you mean by *dat*? Not de man ees *deat*?"

"Plumb center shot, fu'st pop!"

"*Deat*? You don't mean *dat*? Las' time you write, you say he have no sign to die—he live forever."

"Weil, he jest changed his mind an' cashed in his chips. I didn't have time to tell ye ther hull yarn last night, an' that's why I made this appointment fer ter-day."

The Spaniard laughed, with satisfaction.

"*Deat*! I am glad! I haf heem no longar to board. He ees out of vay, and I deed not keel heem."

"You might jest as well in the fu'st place, an' hed it done. You didn't kill him with gun or steel, but you done what wuz wuss—you tortured him to death by years of imprisonment in that horrible underground den. Didn't kill him, Murella? Oh, yes yer did—an' I helped yer! I've come fer my pay!"

"Humpin' jiggers!" gasped the listening boy Spotter. "What big piece of deviltry have I struck this trip?"

CHAPTER II.

SONORA DAN GETS THE DROP.

The Spaniard looked startled.

"Vell, ve not talk of *dat* here!" he exclaimed, glancing quickly about. "Somebody might hear v'at he said."

"All right, old hoss," cheerfully assented the Westerner, in a breezy way. "Jest come down to my room. We kin chin thar all we dern please."

"Vell, I'll come."

"Think I'll come, too," muttered Spotter Bob, and he saw the men move away together. "This little matter is worth looking into. Perhaps I'll have a chance for big fun and block some crooked game? If I can do that count me in, hide, hoofs and horns!"

"Reckon that guy with the Buffalo Bill hair is jest in town from the West. By the looks of him, I'd say his perfession was the road-agent business. He thinks he's some nuts, but he may strike a snag that'll give him a shock one of these days."

Once more the boy started after the Spaniard. He followed the dark-faced man and the Westerner, who had called himself Sonora Dan, along Canal street until they turned into a narrow alley.

Slipping forward, the young Spotter peered around the corner and saw the man disappear into a filthy doorway down the alley.

"Hit or miss, make or break, here goes!" and the now wide-awake Bob darted lightly down the alley.

When he reached the doorway, he could hear the steps of the men on the stairs, but it was so dark inside that wretched hovel he could not see them.

Waiting until they were ascending the second flight, he started to creep upward after them.

The boy, if utterly fearless in his nature, had the caution and craft of a fox, and, now that he felt how much depended on his efforts in that first opening of the case, he brought all his skill as a shadower into play.

Making scarcely a particle of noise, he was able to tell exactly when the men he was after entered a room.

The moment the door had closed behind them, Spotter Bob glided up those stairs like a shadow.

It seemed a particularly lonely and deserted old hole where he found himself, and he wondered if people actually lived in such dark and wretched quarters.

The question was answered by a view he obtained of a room, the door of which stood wide open.

The room was small and stifled, but there were six persons within, and with a single exception all were fast asleep! That exception was in a maudlin state of drunkenness, sitting on a broken chair, from which he seemed in danger of falling to the floor at any moment. He was trying to smoke, but whenever he attempted to put the stem of the pipe in his mouth the bowl would get there first, which frustrated his efforts. The others were lying on the floor or on wretched beds. The odor that came from the room was sickening.

"Nighthawks, as I live!" thought Bob, with a shudder. "I've heard of them and their homes, but this is the first time I ever saw one of the dens."

He knew he was in the midst of desperate men, criminals all, and the chances were he would not be used harmlessly if discovered, as, without doubt, they would take him for a spy.

Still, that did not deter him for going ahead, and he was soon at the head of the second flight.

There he paused to listen.

Three doors were in sight, and he wondered which room the men he was shadowing had entered.

He was not long in doubt.

From behind one of the doors came the murmur of voices, and, a moment later, he was listening there.

He soon heard enough to convince him that the Spaniard and the Westerner were really within, but, much to his dismay, he could not understand what they were saying.

"Ginger!" he thought. "What 'm I goin' ter do? I want'er git onto this racket, but I'll never do it this way. An' the duffers may take a fancy to come out quick and find me here."

He looked around, and a sudden thought struck him, as he observed the room occupied by the two men he had followed was between the other rooms.

"Wonder if I couldn't get into one of them!" he muttered.

The daring lad lost no time in making the attempt. Without hesitation, he walked to the door of the room to the right and softly opened it. If he did not like the appearance of things within, he intended to make

an excuse that he had got into the wrong place, and withdraw.

To his surprise and delight, the room was empty.

"I'll see if I can hear anything in this place," thought the adventurous spy, as he slipped in, leaving the door open a bit, so as to hear any one who might come up the stairs.

A few pieces of broken furniture were in the place, with a miserable cot in one dark corner.

The partition was not thick, and there Spotter Bob listened. He could hear some things, but was still unsatisfied.

Looking around, a knot-hole in the boards above his head caught his eye.

"That's my pudding!"

A moment later, he had a chair beneath the knot-hole. Carefully stepping up on the chair, which was rather shaky, he applied his eye to the hole.

He was fully satisfied with the result.

Within the next room were the two men he had shadowed.

Eye gave place to ear, and he listened.

"This hyar ain't no great shakes of a place," Senora Dan was saying, apologetically; "but we kin talk without any fear of bein' heard, fer ther other two rooms is empty."

"Faugh!" ejaculated the Spaniard. "Ee is disgust! I do not like dis place!"

"How'd you like to spend the rest of yer life hyar, pard?"

"I had ruzare die!"

"Wa-al, this ain't a circumstance ter ther hole in ther ground whar ye had Bart Spaulding chucked, and thar he lived fer nine years! I tell you he changed in that time, Senor Felipe! Ther man that died thar didn't look much like ther man you put in thar."

"You are sure he ees deat—you know eet?"

"I helped plant the poor cuss."

"What haf become of de Injun—de one ve haf to guard dis man?"

"He is hyer."

The Spaniard leaped to his feet.

"Car-r-ramba! Here?"

"Not in this room, but right here in New York."

"How come he here?"

"I brought him."

Felipe Murella was furious.

"Why you do dat—why you bring dat red dev-va here?"

"Oh, I thought he might come in handy," replied Sonora Dan, complacently.

"V'at for you need heem?"

"Wa-al, I lowed you might have fergot some things, an' mebbe the sight of the Injun'd freshen up your memory."

Then Murella raved about the room like a tiger for some moments, storming in a manner that told the seething fury in his hot heart.

"I see v'at you mean, Senor Dan! You mean to threaten me—you theenk to scare me! *Por Dios!* You haf take de wrong man! You vake up Felipe Murella and make heem your enemees you vis, you nevar done eet! I have been your friend—I have pay you good money, very much! Now, v'at you vant?"

"More."

"Monee?"

"Just that, o'd hoss! Money is the staff of life in these hyar degenerate days. I helped you into a fortune, an' now, by ther Great Rockies! you've got to divvy with me!"

"You helpa me into fortune! Nevare! You helpa me get reed of von enemees. I pay you for dat—I pay you vell! I make no monee at—"

"Oh, what's ther use ter lie, Murella.—Hey! drop that, or I'll run a tunnel in yer system! I go loaded, ef I don't carry my guns in sight!"

Again applying his eye to the knot-hole, the boy spy saw a striking tableau.

Crouching as if about to spring at the throat of the other man was the dark-faced Spaniard, and in his fingers was gripped the haft of a long, slender knife, while Sonora Dan was lying back in a chair, his feet on another chair, a revolver in his right hand!

The muzzle of the weapon was turned on the Man from Mexico!

CHAPTER III.

A SNARED SPY.

"JIMMINY jux!"

The boy Spotter faintly gasped the exclamation, and then held his breath and watched to see what would follow.

For some moments neither of the two men stirred, their eyes fighting a fierce battle, then the hand of the Spaniard, holding the knife, slowly and steadily glided beneath his coat. When it came out again, the slender blade was not to be seen.

"Thar, that's better," nodded the Westerner, as he relaxed the pressure of his finger on the trigger of his revolver, allowing the hammer, which had been slightly raised, to drop gently back to place. "I don't want ter shoot yer, pard; but I hain't hankerin' to be chopped up fer chowder."

"Den why you give me de lie, senor?" smoothly asked Felipe, yet with a deadly sound in his voice.

"Wa-al, it popped out. An' you know you was lyin', pard."

"You have no right to say dat!"

"Why not? Didn't you get rid of Bartley Spaulding to obtain his share of the Little Nell Mine?"

"No, sare! Dat was *not* de reason!"

"Derned ef you don't surprise me! W'ot did yer do it fer, then?"

"I hate-a him!"

"Is that all?"

"Eet is. I do not geet his share. He have a daughtar—de von for veech he name de mine."

"Little Nell?"

"Dat ees eet."

"Where is she now?"

"I do not know."

"What? You can't mean that, Murella?"

"I do mean eet. She have disappear complete."

"Then the mine is certainly all yours, old hoss."

"No."

"Why not?"

"She have a gran'fazole."

"What of that?"

"He know where she be!"

"Well?"

"He claim de shares—he geet dem. I sell all my interest some mont' ago."

"What? Just after the mine is in running order once more? The cave-in blocked it for years, and the lost lead could not be found, but now it is opened up again an' ther old thing's payin'. Hev you bin an' sold out?"

"I have."

"What for, pard?"

"Vell, I nevar know but sometime dat Bartlee Spauldeeng get away and look for me. Eef I have interest in de mine, he find me—he trace me. Eef I have none, he do not trace me."

"But, he's dead now, I tell ye."

"I deed not know dat when I seel de shares"

"Well, how about Spaulding's girl—how does she get her share of the proceeds?"

Murella shrugged his shoulders.

"Dat I do not know. Eet ees not'ing to me."

"Where is her grandfather?"

"I do not know dat now, sare."

Sonora Dan was silent for some moments, during which he gazed at his companion searchingly.

"Look hyar, old man," he finally cried,

falling into the free-and-easy swagger of the West, "I reckon you're stuffin' me with guff!"

"V'at ees goof?"

"Waal, it's a perlite way of tellin' critters they're lyin'. I saw yon didn't like the straight out word for it, an' so I called it guff."

"You have vera sharp tongue, Senor Dan."

The Spaniard was biting his lip, and he looked as if he longed to cut the heart out of the swaggering rascal who faced him and talked to him in such a fearless manner.

The Westerner simply laughed.

"I'm a hard man ter bluff," was his assertion. "But, even ef all you've told me is true, you've got ter pony up."

"Ponee? V'at is dat?"

"Come down with the rino—the rocks—the scudi. I helped you do a dirty job, an' I mean to be paid in full for it. It hain't my way ter shut a pore devil up in ther ground an' let him rot ter death alive thar, an' ef you'd done what I wanted in ther fu'st place, you'd let me got up a row with Spaulding so I c'u'd bore him. That'd bin more deacent-like an' manly. It'd even b'in better ter knifed him in ther back, though that thar's ther game of Greasers—beggin' yer pardon fer ther word."

"Oh, speak right out, Senor Dan!" grated Murella. Say v'at you like; don't minde me, sare!"

"I reckon I've come mighty nigh doin' that thar. I have a way of talking right out in public.—But, let's get to business, Felipe."

"I have no more beesnez vid you, sare. You have your trouble vor not'ing ven you come here to bleed me."

"You won't pony up?"

"No, sare!"

"Bet a good hoss you do. Come!"

"You try to scare-a me, ha?"

"You seem to have forgotten that I have brought Injun Jack along."

"V'at of dat?"

"This: We have come here for money, and we'll put you where you'll never do up any more men ther way ye done Bartley Spaulding, if you don't fork over!"

"Again you threatun! I am not 'fraid of you bote. You try to keel me, ha?"

"Waal, I won't speak fer ther Injun; but I'd try another lay."

"What?"

"I'd ruin an disgrace you—I'd get the grip of the law on you—I'd see you in prison!"

"Preeson! You threatun me dat? Eef you try eet, you go dere, too! I have you on dat! Eef I hire you to do dis job, den you be as much in de scrape as me. You nevere t'ink of dat, I reckon?"

"I have thought of it every way."

"Den you should know v'at I say ees right. You are in de same box vid me."

"Waal, ef ye take me on that tack, I'll let ther Injun git at ye."

"Ha! I meet him vid de same vapon v'at he use—I no care for heem!"

The Westerner was certainly failing to get any advantage of Murella, but he tried to conceal his chagrin. All of a sudden, he started up, crying:

"If no other way, dern me! I'll find Spaulding's gal an' make a clean breast of it to her! Either you'll do the right thing by me an' ther Injun, ur we'll down ye some way!"

What reply the Spaniard would have made to this was never known, for, at that moment, there was a startled cry, followed by a scuffle in the adjoining room.

Spotter Bob had been intensely interested in the talk of the two villains—so interested that he heard no sound save their voices.

Something caused him to look around, although it was certainly not the sound of a footstep or movement.

The door was wide open, and, standing in the doorway, looking at him with a pair of beady eyes, was a man with a dusky face of coppery hue. This man's clothes were greasy buckskin, and a battered high hat sat on his head, while his long straight hair fell over his shoulders.

Naturally, Bob Braddock uttered a cry of astonishment and alarm.

Then the strange man came at the boy with two swinging strides.

Bob attempted to spring from the chair, but it went down with a crash, throwing him in a heap on the floor. Before he could rise, he was in the clutch of the intruder.

"Let go!" cried the Spotter.

"Not much leggo!" was the grunted retort. "Spy! Injun Jack ketch um!"

The hands of the copper-faced man were like iron, and the squirming boy found it impossible to break away. He was dragged from the room and around into the other, where were the Spaniard and Sonora Dan.

"Hey!" cried the latter, as his eyes fell on the trapped lad. "What's this ye've got, Injun?"

"Spy!" was the reply. "Ketch him watch—listen. What do?"

Felipe Murella gave a cry of savage satisfaction.

"Eet ees de leetle dev-vall!" he snarled.

"Now, I settle vid heem!"

CHAPTER IV.

USED FOR A TARGET.

SENOR FELIPE MURELLA was so exasperated by what had preceded the appearance of the unlucky boy in the clutch of the half-blood that the sight of Spotter Bob apparently robbed him entirely of reason.

"Leetle whelp!" he hissed. "You treep me up—you make de people laugh at me! I feex you for dat!"

And he made a leap at the lad.

"Hold hard an' steady, critter!"

Up from his chair shot Sonora Dan, as if he was worked by springs. With one swoop of his hand, he caught the Spaniard by the collar.

Despite his size, the small man from the West was very strong, and, with a single surge, he sent Murella reeling backward, nearly overthrowing the frothing scoundrel.

"Knock a kid!" exclaimed Dan, in disgust.

"Would you do that, pard?"

"Dat v'at I vill!" and the Mexican again drew out the blade, as he sprang forward, having regained his equilibrium.

"Out de vay!"

He struck savagely at Dan, but the man of the fiery mustache grasped his wrist and held him fast.

"No you don't—not while I'm round!"

For a few seconds, there was a fierce struggle, but Murella was no match for the Westerner in a scuffle, and he was again sent backward, while Dan followed him up and pinned him to the wall.

"Steady, now! We ain't in Mexico now!" commanded the nervy desperado. "Do you want to commit murder? Ef ye do, you'll be dern sure ter bring up in thet thar chair whar they give ye a dost of 'lectricity thet'd let any dentist pull yer teeth 'thout yer ever knowin' w'en he done it."

"Oh, you shall pay for dis! No man put hees hand on Felipe Murella like dis and never pay for eet!"

"Tommy rot! I never saw ther Greaser yit I was skeered of! W'at's ther kid done ter you?"

"He trip-a me—he make me de laugh stock of de street! He t'row me on my back!"

Sonora Dan looked at Spotter Bob with renewed interest and something like admiration.

"Well, why don't yer give him a good lickin', an' let it go at that?"

"Perhap' I be a leetle too qveek. I vill not keel heem but I have my revenge, sure!"

"Now ye're comin' ter yer senses," nodded Sonora Dan, as he released Murella. "Ef I wuz in your place, pard, I'd leave that thar toad sticker to home. Ef ye don't, fust thing ye know, you'll git into trouble, an' ther perlice'll run ye in."

All through this struggle Bob had been ready to squirm and try to break away, if he saw the Spaniard get too near him.

The Indian had maintained his grip on the lad's coat, saying nothing, but watching every movement and hearing every word. His face was expressionless, but he was fully alert.

"Ginger! this is a bad scrape!" was the boy's mental observation. "These mugs'd do a boy up soon, if they took a notion—specially that shadow-faced bloke. Bob, yer've tackled a hard job!"

The half-blood filled him with great concern, for, although the man seemed very quiet, something told the lad that he was the most deadly of the trio.

"Now, Pard Jack," said Sonora Dan. "Tell us how it is ye drags this yar kid in hyar."

"Catch 'um."

"Where?"

"Next room."

"W'at wuz he doin' thar?"

"Play spy."

"Is that so? Waal, we'll hev ter find out how much he knows. Ef it is too much—"

The Westerner did not say what would result on those conditions, but his face seemed to indicate it would go hard with the youthful Spotter.

"Maybe you t'ink we have bettaire put heem out de vay aftar all," said the Spaniard, with a sneer.

"Well, not in your way," promptly returned Sonora Dan. "It puts some critter on the scent, an' then thar's blazes ter pay. Thar are lots of other ways of gittin' rid of critters in a town like New York."

Bob shuddered.

"He's bad as ther rest, but a little more cautious," thought the lad.

"Look hyar kid," snapped Dan, eying the boy viciously, "w'ot fer wuz you in thet thar room?"

"I'm stoppin' t'here now, old socks!" cheerfully replied the plucky Spotter.

"Stoppin' there?"

"Sure. That's my hotel. Ketch on?"

"You're lyin'."

"That ain't complimentary, your highness."

"But it is true."

"How d'yer know?"

"W'en I took this hyer dug-out yesterday, them yar rooms was empty."

"Well, I engaged the parlor adjoinin' later on, old boy. Take a tumble."

"Ugh!" grunted the half-blood. "Boy up on chair—peek through hole in wall."

"Jest got up there to see if there was anybody in here explained Bob. "I was goin' to sing."

"Sing?"

"Yep. I'm a warbler down at Trinity Church—in the choir. See!"

"Leetle liar!" exclaimed Murella.

"Say, you fellers ain't perlite a bit. I object to bein' called names. I'm givin' ye a straight lay, sports. Didn't know but somebody was in here."

"What of that?"

"Oh, I'm careful. Didn't want to disturb yer. See? Last place where I was, I got inter trouble singin'. People on all sides kicked like steers ev'ry time I opened my trap. One man came in an' swiped me with a boot-jack. Later on, the landlord dropped round an' told me I'd have to get out instanter. Said all the other lodgers was goin' to leave if I didn't. I had to slide."

The boy rattled off this yarn with the ut-

most nonchalance and appearance of candor; but it was wasted on the trio of scoundrels.

"Do ye tell ther truth?" growled Dan. "Truth!" cried Bob, protestingly. "W'ot d'yer take me fer?"

"Leetle sneak," nodded the Spaniard. At this, the lad flushed, somewhat hotly. "Say!" and he pointed straight at the Man from Mexico. "I don't like that any to speak of! You want to let up, or I'll make you sad some day!"

"Bah!" "I'm business, an' I keep my word." "You threaten me, boy?" The Spaniard was growing furious again. "Steady!" ordered Dan. "Let me handle this yar kid."

Then he turned to the half-blood, saying: "Putt ther youngster up ag'in the partition thar an' hold him. I want ter persuade him some."

Injun Jack promptly obeyed the command of the Westerner, standing Bob with his back against the partition.

Sonora Dan sat down on a chair again, at the same time taking out his revolver. There was a devilish light in his unsteady eyes, and he lifted the weapon, pointing it straight at Bob's head.

"Ef you don't spit out the truth, kid, an' spit her out dern lively, blow me ef I don't sock yer with a pill out of this yar gun!"

Spotter Bob actually laughed in the face of the man.

"Now ye're kiddin', old sport!" he said. "You ain't ther kind of a man as shoots boys."

"Ain't?" "Not much." "Why not?" "Well, fer one thing, you've got too much sense."

"He theenk you don't dare shoot," sneered Murella. "In dat he theenk raight."

"Waal, now, don't yer be too sure of that. Boy, how much of our talk did you hear?"

"If I don't tell—what?" "Blow me cold! I'll use yer for a target!" "And bring the perlice down on yer."

"Not much. Looker thet wall thar; see that knot hole whar ther Injun said ye wuz lookin' through? Waal, thar wuz a knot in it when I tuck this yar room yesterday."

"What of that? I didn't knock it out."

"Waal, I did, an' I done it with this yar gun. Set right hyar in this chair an' shot it out. I didn't waste any bullets on ther job. It didn't bring no perlice, but three or four of ther lodgers from down below came sneak-in' up ter see what I wuz at. I jest turned ther gun on them an' told 'em ter mosey, as I wuz havin' a little pistol practice, an' I wouldn't be disturbed. Told 'em it wuz my reg'ler daily custom, an' they needn't bother ter come round ef they heerd me shootin' any time."

"So yer see, boy, thar ain't a chance in a hundred thet we'd be bothered ef I did use yer fer a target."

"But you won't!" "Won't I?"

"Not this trip."

"I'll do it ef you don't tell ther truth an' tell it dern sudden!"

"Rats!"

The word had barely left Spotter Bob's lips when the revolver in the hand of the desperado cracked!

CHAPTER V.

THE FLOWER GIRL.

THE bullet passed so close to the boy's head that it grazed his ear.

To the astonishment of the trio of scoundrels, Bob Braddock uttered no cry, and did not seem at all frightened.

"That was a dead bum shot," he observed.

But the outward appearance of the lad was no indication of his real feelings, for he was actually frightened very much, even though he felt certain Sonora Dan meant to scare him into a confession. He had seen cowboys shoot at Buffalo Bill's Wild West show, and knew they could plant their bullets exactly where they liked; still it was not a pleasant thing to stand up and allow a man to see how near he could come to the living target without hitting it.

But the three men gazed at the boy in wonder, uttering various exclamations.

"Caramba!" gasped Murella.

"Much pluck!" grunted the half-blood.

"Waal, I sw'ar!" ejaculated Sonora Dan.

"Don't swear old socks," advised Bob.

"If you do, you won't catch any fish."

"Ha! ha!" evilly laughed the Man from Mexico, nodding his head at Sonora Dan.

"You theenk you can scare dis boy, ha? He don't be scare so easee. Better shoot heem sure, and have de job done vid."

"Then, hyar goes!"

Five times the revolver spoke, the shots being fired in rapid succession that there scarcely seemed a break between them.

The smoke filled the room, hiding the boy and the Indian for a moment.

From the midst of it came a cry, and, as it lifted, the half-blood was seen leaping to his feet from the floor, to which he had been thrown.

Spotter Bob was gone!

The door had not been securely closed, and the boy had darted from the room, under cover of the smoke.

He had not been touched by any of the bullets, for it was not Sonora Dan's purpose to shoot him, but, seeing his opportunity, he had escaped, having broken away by slipping out of his coat, leaving the garment in the grasp of the half-blood, who was deftly overthrown.

"After him!" roared Sonora Dan. "Don't let him get away!"

It was not necessary to give Injun Jack such instructions, for he was already in pursuit of the fleeing boy.

Like a young panther, Spotter Bob went leaping down the shaky stairs and shot out into the alley. He felt sure he would be pursued, and did not stop when he reached the outer air, but scooted out of the alley like a streak.

"This is the greatest racket I ever run up against!" was his mental observation, as he reached the Bowery and dodged into a mass of moving people.

Looking back, he caught a glimpse of the pursuing half-blood, but he saw the Indian had lost sight of him, and took care not to let the fellow see him again.

"I want ter git back an' see the smoky-faced Mexican when he leaves that hole," muttered Bob, as he hastened around a corner.

"Don't want to lose track of him, now. He's the chief rascal of the lot, though the shooter with the long hair is tryin' to get him foul."

He made his way around a block and was soon on Canal street again.

Selecting a doorway on the side of the street opposite the mouth of the alley, the lad waited and watched. In the course of thirty minutes, he saw Injun Jack come back, and fancied the half-blood looked very ashamed and disgusted with himself.

"If I was out on the perary, I s'pose he'd 'a' follered me 'thout a struggle, but he can't trail me in a big city like this. I'm right ter home here, an' he ain't."

Bob saw the half-breed disappear in the alley, and then he patiently waited another thirty minutes.

At the end of that time, Felipe Murella came out of the alley and hurried away.

"You're the feller I'm lookin' for!" muttered the youthful Spotter, with satisfaction.

After the Spaniard he started.

Murella had no idea he was followed, and so he did not make any attempt to bother the tracker. To the Bowery he went, turning down town.

Bob easily kept track of the man, and in a short time, Park Row was reached.

Of a sudden, Murella stopped short and looked eagerly into the face of a rather pretty girl who was selling flowers to passing pedestrians.

The girl was sixteen or seventeen years of age, being very sweet and pretty, despite the poverty of her dress. Her eyes were dark as midnight and her hair black, making her seem all the more striking on account of the purity of her health tinted cheeks. The flowers she was selling were not sweeter, and she really seemed like a delicate rosebud, strangely out of place on the thronged thoroughfare as a vender of anything.

The Spaniard gazed earnestly, rather excitedly, at the girl, while Spotter Bob watched him closely. Had the boy been nearer, he might have heard Murella say:

"I believe dat ees de child—I t'ink eet ees de lost heiress! Eef it be—"

Uttering not another word, he approached the girl, catching her by the arm, as he asked:

"V'at ees your name?"

She started from him, in alarm.

"Don't hurt me! I have done nothing!"

"I veel not hurt-a you. Tell me your name, leetle girl."

"It is Nell."

Murella looked delighted.

"Nell—v'at else?"

Still she drew back and hesitated.

"Ees cet Spaldeeng?" questioned the Spaniard.

"Yes, sir."

"Ha! I think dat! You are de vera girl I look for! I vant you!"

Those words alarmed the flower girl more than ever. She tried to escape from his grasp, crying:

"Let me go! What can you want of me?"

"I have somet'ing to tell you—I have much to tell you. Come vid me."

"Where?"

"Oh, what is the matter vid you? Do I look like de ruffian? Somet'ing have happened."

Spotter Bob had been watching every move, and his anger rose rapidly. He saw the girl try to escape from the Spaniard's grasp, while Murella held her fast.

"If he tries to hurt her, I'll crack his nut!" grated the lad.

After some minutes, the boy saw the girl was listening intently while the Spaniard talked.

"He's givin' her a fairy tale, an' I'll bet a house on it!" said the boy, to himself.

Soon he noticed the girl was growing excited and alarmed, although she no longer tried to run from the Spaniard. Then Murella hurried toward the spot where some cabs were standing, leaving the girl where he had found her.

She no longer tried to sell her flowers, as Bob could see, and, scenting something wrong, the boy darted up to her side.

"Say, miss!" he exclaimed, touching his hat, "be you waitin' for that dusky-skinned son of rascality as just left you?"

She started nervously, looking at him without replying, and he saw there were tears in her eyes.

Bob went on:

"Cause if you be, I want to give ye a warning: he's a bad man to have anything to do with."

"Are you sure?" she asked, in a musical voice. "He told me—"

"What?"

"That my grandfather has been injured severely and is in the hospital. He is going to take me there in a cab."

Bob whistled.

"So that's his little game! Well, I tell

you he don't know a hoot about your grandfather, and, if he gets ye inter a cab, he'll never take ye to any hospital, you bet your good money!"

CHAPTER VI. BOB A FUGITIVE.

THE girl was frightened.

"Oh, what do you mean?" she asked, tremblingly.

"Just what I said, miss," was the prompt reply. "When did he say he saw your grandfather?"

"He said he just came from the hospital where grandfather was taken."

"Well, he's a beautiful yarn-spinner! I have been on his trail for the last two hours, and I know he has not seen your grandfather in that time. Don't you trust him."

"What I shall I do?"

"Skip—slide—vanish! I'll remain here and see his ribs when he returns with the cab, an' I'll jest tell him you've gone home to see if his little yarn is really true."

"I will take your advice," said the girl; "for something tells me you are honest."

"Well, I try ter be, an' if there's anything I hate it's crookedness. Crookedness don't pay, never did, never will—Say, give me your address. I have something to tell you soon as I can find time to drop round."

The girl gave a number on the Bowery, adding:

"Come right up-stairs to the top floor and rap on the door to the right. I live there with my grandfather. It's not a very nice place, but we can't afford—"

"Don't say another word! Any kind of a place where you live must be nice! I'm no millionaire. Now, light out before the muggy-faced muck-a-muck appears with the cab. Good-by."

"Good-by, and thank you!"

Bob gazed after her admiringly, as she hastened away, muttering:

"Sweetness! Why, that's the condensed essence of glory! She's jest my style fo a T, but she's got education, if she is poor, and I ain't no great shakes at school-book knowledge. Never had much show to git it. Reckon she wouldn't take to me over much. But, she's a reg'lar heart-crusher!"

He had scribbled the address she gave him on a scrap of paper, and now he looked at it, adding:

"Spaulding's the name, an' that's the girl, I'll bet! She's the heiress, though she don't look like one. Robert Braddock, there's crookedness here—heaps of it! This Spanish gent has been robbin' that girl of what's rightfully hern'—an' that, after killin' her father. Oh, Mr. Seenyaw Felipe Murella, I'll git onter your collar, or I'm a chuck!"

His meditations were broken by the appearance of a cab that drew up at the curb, while the Spaniard quickly got out, looking eagerly around.

"Hello, Seenyaw!" saucily called the boy, keeping a short distance away. "Lookin' fer somebody?"

The Man from Mexico uttered a vicious execration as his eyes rested on the lad.

"You?" he snarled. "How come you here?"

"Oh, it's a way I have," was the cool retort. "You're apt to see me anywhere. Lookin' fer somebody?"

"I look fer de poleeseman! I geef you in charge to heem!"

"I didn't know but you was lookin' fer a girl," laughed the Spotter. "One was here a short time ago, but she took a notion you had been playin' roots on her, so she skipped. She's gone home to see if her grandfather is damaged as bad as you said."

Murella made a dart for Bob, but the boy bounded lightly away, laughing tauntingly.

Luck was against Bob just then, for he ran plump and fair into the hands of a

policeman, who grasped him and held him, saying.

"Hello, you castless young rascal! What are you up to?"

"Nothing, sir."

"What are you running from that man for?"

"Just for fun. Let me go!"

"Don't you do dat, offisar!" cried Murella, coming up. "Hang to de young rascal!"

"Do you make a charge against him?"

"Dat ees what I do."

"What has he done?"

"He be a young t'ief."

"It's a lie!" hotly cried Bob, losing his nerve for a moment at the charge.

The Spaniard coolly added:

"He steal my vatch, offisar, and den he run. I see heem give de vatch to anodar boy, but dis is de one v'at steal eet."

"Oh, what a mean lie! I never stole anything in my life!"

"I will take him to the station," said the policeman. "Come along, sir, and make your charge against him. These young pick-pockets and snatchers are getting bolder and bolder in this locality. I think it'll be a good plan to make an example of this one."

But, Spotter Bob had no idea of being dragged to a police station and convicted of a crime he never committed. With a sudden, eel-like twist, he broke from the officer's grasp, and then fled like a deer darting in and out amid the pedestrians.

"Stop thief!"

The terrible cry was raised behind him, and, glancing over his shoulder, he saw Murella and the policeman coming at a run, waving their arms and shouting, while a number of men and boys joined in the chase.

"They'll have some fun before they ketch me!" panted Bob, settling down to do his level best.

From Park Row he darted onto Nassau street, but a second look back showed him the crowd of pursuers was increasing, while the policeman was signaling for another to head the fugitive off.

In a twinkling the lad wheeled and darted through the big doors of one of the great office buildings he had been about to pass.

The elevator was down, and the boy who ran it stepped out a moment for something.

In darted Bob, slammed the grated door, gave a pull at the rope, and up shot the car.

"This is quicker than climbin' stairs," he half-laughed, although there was a grim and determined look on his clean-cut face.

Right up to the top he went before he stopped the elevator. He heard excited shouts in the building far below, but he simply said:

"Git a rustle on if you expect to keep up with the procession. When Robert moves, he gets along quick."

Out of the elevator he stepped, thrust his hands into his pockets and sauntered quietly along the corridor, whistling "The Bowery." No one would have thought to look at him that he was a fugitive from the police, who were hot on his track at that very minute.

An office door opened and a boy about Bob's age came out, leaving the door ajar. He had a cuspidore in his hand, and, with that, he slowly dragged himself along to the wash-room, which he entered, closing the door behind him.

Bob could look into the office by the open door, and he saw there was no one inside, while a light sweeping-coat lay on a chair, against which leaned a broom. All this seemed to indicate the office boy was left to clean up, while the proprietor was out to lunch. The boy who went into the wash-room was in his shirt sleeves.

"Just got the job done an' took off the

coat," muttered Bob, hearing sounds that indicated his pursuers were coming up the stairs. "This is my job."

He saw a key in the lock of the wash-room door, and, darting forward, turned it, taking it out and flinging it down in a corner.

Then he hurried into the office which the boy with the cuspidore had just left, quickly slipping on the sweeping coat.

"If that boy takes as long to clean the spittoon as he did to get from this office to the wash room, that's all I ask," thought the Spotter.

As soon as the coat was on, he tossed his hat under a pile of papers on a stand, ran his fingers through his hair to make it stand on end and twisted his face into an expression that made him look like anybody but himself.

He did not close the office door, for he believed in boldness. Picking up the broom, he busied himself at sweeping out the office, which had just been swept clean by the boy in the wash room.

The position of the elevator car told the pursuers which floor the boy had stopped at, and they soon came puffing up the stairs, the policeman at the head.

Broom in hand, Bob Braddock stopped at the door and stared at them, as if surprised.

"Hey, boy!" called the policeman. "Did you see him?"

"Him?" echoed Bob, stupidly.

"Yes—the boy!"

"What boy?"

"A young thief. He came up here. You must have seen him. Where did he go?"

The policeman came over and looked into the office past the boy with the broom, as if he expected to see the fugitive crouching in a corner. Then he looked at Bob, saying:

"This is John Wetmore's office I see by the name on the door. Who are you, youngster?"

"I'm Mr. Wetmore's office boy."

"I think there is some mistake here," said a quiet voice behind the Spotter. "I am Mr. Wetmore, but you certainly are not my office boy!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE MAN WHO DIED.

"GREAT guns!"

Spotter Bob uttered the exclamation.

Turning, he saw the door of an inner office had opened to admit a stern, business-like man, and that man was the author of the words recorded at the close of the last chapter.

"I'm in for it!" gasped the lad.

"What's that? What's that?" demanded the policeman. "You say this boy—"

"Is not my office boy, unless some magic has changed him entirely in appearance," said Mr. Wetmore.

At this moment there was a great commotion in the wash-room, from which came loud, appealing cries and heavy pounding on the door.

"Lemme out! Help! Somebody's locked me in!"

"That sounds like my boy's voice!" declared Mr. Wetmore, excitedly.

Then Bob knew his game was up, for he caught sight of Felipe Murella, who had just reached the head of the stairs and was coming forward.

The tricky youngster did not wait for the Spaniard to point him out.

"I want you!" cried the officer, as he made a grab for the boy Spotter.

"You'll get—this!" and with the word, Bob Braddock swung the broom about his head and struck the policeman fairly in the face with the bushy end.

The man was staggered and blinded for the instant, but he made a blind grab with both hands.

Bob avoided the officer's grasp, darting out of the office into the corridor, the broom held at a position of "charge."

The end of the handle took Senor Felipe Murella, of Mexico, somewhere in the region below the belt. The blow doubled the Spaniard up like a jack-knife, bringing a howl of rage and pain from his lips.

The broom was knocked from the boy's hands, but he did not need it any more, and he ran straight onward.

The elevator car was just where he left it, the door standing wide open, and he darted into it instantly, an idea of escape flashing through his head.

Slam! the door closed in the very face of the policeman, who had recovered himself in time to almost grasp the slippery lad.

Swish! down went the car!

"Talk about rackets!" panted Spotter Bob. "This beats anything they can turn out in Philadelfy! New York is a very quick village!"

On his way down he passed the elevator boy and several others who were running up the stairs.

"Hoppin' jee! what a picnic!" laughed the lively lad.

The moment the lower floor was reached, he flung open the door, shot out, and darted through the doorway like a streak. Around the nearest corner he went, turning toward William street, and the way he doubled and twisted during the next few minutes was calculated to baffle pursuers.

It did. Bob soon found he was not followed, and slackened his pace, walking along leisurely, having time to think the whole affair over and laugh at what had happened.

"That's what I call a great rustle," he muttered, cheerfully. "So fur, I have beat ther Spanish gent at every turn. Oh, I move a little when I git started! I'll make Seenjaw Feeleap dead sore on hisself before I'm done wid him."

"Ter think ther blöke should accuse me of swipin' his ticker! That raised my ruffles! I'll have to look out fer thet perlice-man after this."

"But, ther lost heiress, Little Nell, is found, sure. I know jest where she is. Wonder if Mur-r-rella found out 'fore he went fer the cab? If he did—"

"Well, it's goin' to be a hot fight anyhow, an' I'm right in it my whole bigness. I've got onter some points that are mighty inter-estin', by jee! I know the Seenjaw hed Bartley Spaulding shut up in some kind of a hole in the ground so he could git square with him, or git holt of the Little Nell Mine. I reckon it was *that* the Spanish rip done the trick fer. It strikes me he was givin' Sonora Dan lots of guff about sellin' the stock an' not knowing anything about Little Nell's share. That girl ain't gittin' her just dues, an' I *know* it! I'm goin' ter see sne gits 'em, by jimminy!"

Bob reached the New Bowery and passed under the big Brooklyn Bridge.

As he was hurrying along, he espied several boys of the tough class who were pestering an old man. The latter was apparently very weak, for he was tottering in his efforts to get away from the tormenting young ruffians, terror in his eyes. He was poorly dressed, his hair and beard being dingy gray, while the strange and awful pallor of his skin gave him a ghastly look.

"Git onter der old freak!"

"Twig der corpse!"

"Say, mister, when'd yer escape from der coffin?"

Various cries of this sort came from the lips of the young rascals, as they pushed the wretched old man, pulled his coat, and even hit him with sticks and stones.

Bob's blood boiled in a moment.

"Looker them young skunks!" he grated, clinching his fists. "They'll make elegant jug-birds when they git ter be men!"

He darted forward like a young cyclone, and his hard fists knocked over two of the tough youngsters before they realized they were attacked.

"You cowardly sneaks!" was his cry, as he struck a third one a staggering blow in the mouth. "Pickin' on an old feller like this! Darned if I don't believe I kin lick the whole crowd of such cowards!"

For a moment, it really seemed as if he would prove the victor in short order, for he took them so by surprise he had upset nearly every one before they realized what was coming.

Then the leader utter a howl.

"Slug him! Biff him in der eye! Give him der razzle-dazzle!"

"I'm the hardest boy *you* ever tried ter razzle!" cried Bob, as he kicked the fellow's feet from under him and sent him sprawling.

A moment later, the boys were scrambling to their feet and making for their daring assailant.

The old man had tottered on a few steps, stopping to look back, shaking in every limb, as if stricken with palsy. His terror was apparently so great he could not utter a sound, although he tried to do so.

Spotter Bob put his back against a wall, and, with his clinched fists at "guard," sent out his blast of defiance.

"Come on, you measly whelps! I'm good fer the whole gang of ye!"

And for about three minutes it seemed as if he really was able to hold his own with the crowd. It was a lively fight while it lasted, but one of the young thugs finally struck Bob with a stick, staggering the boy champion of the old man.

"Jump him!"

"Now's der time!"

"Do him up!"

But, just when they would have overpowered the lad from the Quaker City, one of the mob cried:

"Cheese it! Cops!"

Two policemen were coming at a run, the sight of brass buttons caused the mob to scatter like a flock of frightened chickens. They darted into alleyways, doorways, anywhere to escape, and the stunned lad was left leaning against the wall.

Bob would have fled from the police, fearing arrest on the charge made by Murella, but, before he could do so the officers were there.

"Hello!" growled one. "What's all this row?"

"Jest a little scrimmage, boss," was the Spotter's cheery reply, as he rubbed his head where he had been hit. "Guess they'd done me up if you hadn't come."

"How'd it start?"

"Them mokes was givin' the old man there a hustlin' an' I dipped in."

"Against the gang?"

"Sure, Mike."

"Well, either you've got a head of sand, or you're a bigger fool than you look."

"Thanks awfully! Come round ter my office an' git yer cash."

The second policeman had pursued some of the young thugs, and the one who questioned Bob paid little attention to the boy, after finding he was not injured, although he advised him not to hang around that locality long.

The old man of the ghastly face came feebly up to the boy.

"Thank you! thank you!" he said weakly.

"You are brave. I don't think you would fear rats—oh, the horrid rats! And the dark—it is so dreadful!"

He was still shaking, as if with fear.

"Hello!" thought Bob, noticing how strange were the man's words. "What's ther matter with this old coon? Out of his head, I'll bet a dollar!" Aloud he observed:

"All right, mister; glad to do you a turn. They was raisin' merry razzle with ye, sure."

"And I am so tired—so hungry! The world has changed since I died."

Bob whistled.

"So you're dead? Well, you look it. What are you, a spook?"

"Yes."

"You don't say! How long since?"

The old vagrant raised a shaking hand to his head.

"I don't know—I can't tell! A man cannot keep trace of time when he is dead."

"Reckon not."

"Say," observed the policeman, "you know this old duffer?"

"Sure," was the instant reply, for the boy suspected the officer thought of "running in" the strange man. "He's all right—has these spells sometimes, that's all."

"He'll be hurtin' somebody some time."

"What—*him*? Does he look liable to hurt anybody? Not much! He's harmless."

"All right, if you say so. You'd better take care of him and get him off the street."

"All right, your honor. I'll do it." Then he turned to the old man, saying:

"Come, uncle; trot along with me."

"Where?"

"Anywhere away from here. If yer stay round here, them toughs'll tackle yer ag'in."

The tottering old wreck allowed the boy to lead him onward up the New Bowery toward Chatham Square.

"Where are you taking me?" falteringly questioned the man.

"Home."

"Home! I have no home."

"Well, that's tough! Where do you live?"

"I don't live. I'm dead."

"Oh, yes! I'd clean forgot that. But, you must stay somewhere. Where is it?"

"Anywhere I can. I will stay anywhere to get away from the rats and the darkness. I am afraid of the rats, and the darkness is so terrible! It is like that grave where I was buried so long—oh, so long!"

"What's your name?"

"The dead have no names."

"Well, what did it used ter be w'en ye was alive?"

"I do not remember—I can't remember things back there. Sometimes it almost seems I can remember, and then, just when I am about to grasp something tangible, it all fades from me."

"You must have been an awful drinker! What yer playin' me fer *now*—whisky or beer?"

"No, no, *no*! I do not drink! But I am hungry. I wonder how it is a ghost can be hungry? But, I am hungry and faint—oh, so dreadfully weak!"

The boy could see the old fellow was really staggering with apparent weakness, for it did not seem the man had been drinking.

"Well," said Bob who was generous, "I'll blow ye to a sandwich. That's all the extent of my pile'll let me do now, though I'd like ter give yer a square feed. I ain't goin' to let ye have no ten cents to spend on drink, so I'll buy the sandwich myself. Here's a place."

At a lunch counter, open to the street, the boy purchased a sandwich and gave it to the old man, adding:

"Got ter leave yer now, mister, fer business is mighty pressin'. Good by!"

"Good by! God bless you!" There were tears in the eyes of the deranged, for without doubt the man's mind was affected.

Bob hurried up the Bowery, whistling cheerfully, feeling in a very good humor, for all of the events which had taken place.

The old man sat down on some steps to eat his sandwich, and he had just torn one greedy mouthful from it when a big dog darted up and snatched it from his hand.

Away ran the dog.

The man scrambled to his feet and cried despairingly.

"Stop! stop! Oh, God! It is gone! It is gone!"

He pursued the dog a short distance, but

his weak legs would not carry him far, and he fell in a heap on his face.

After some moments, he sat up, looking despairingly around. Then he slowly and painfully arose to his feet, walking onward aimlessly, his white lips gasping:

"So hungry! so hungry!"

Tears ran down his ghastly pale cheeks, and in all great New York there was no more wretched or pitiful human being to be found.

CHAPTER VIII.

MURELLA FINDS HIS PRIZE.

LITTLE NELL hurried home as fast as she could, in a perfect flutter of excitement and apprehension.

"Oh, if it should be true—if grandfather should be hurt!" she murmured, as she made her way up the Bowery. "Perhaps that man told me the truth, after all."

She scarcely noticed she was crushing some of the flowers in her grasp, although they had cost her money, and every cent meant a great deal to her and her grandfather.

Once a dandified individual in very loud clothes stopped her and asked the price of the flowers. When she mechanically told him ten cents a bunch, he selected one, thrust half a dollar into her hand, and said, with a significant leer:

"The change is yours, sweetness—keep it. I swear you are a beaut! Let's go into this *cafe* and have some wine. I'll blow you off in great style."

Then something happened that astonished him a great deal, for the girl flung the silver half-dollar fairly into his face, and darted onward, without a word.

"Well, may I be swiped!" exclaimed the astounded young blood, as he stared after the retreating figure of the girl. "She acted as if I'd insulted her—and she selling flowers on the Bowery! It beats me! But she *was* a bird!"

For some distance Little Nell ran on, panting, her cheeks aflame. Young though she was, she had been reared in New York, a great deal of her life having been spent in the crowded and poor sections of the city, and a child thus brought up cannot be unaware of the vice that flaunts itself all around her. It is remarkable that a girl can grow up amid such surroundings and remain unsullied.

But Little Nell, although she had read the half hinted meaning in the man's words and looks, was pure and sweet as a wildwood daisy. Naturally, she had resented the blood's manner, and, in her excitement, had flung the piece of silver into his face, precious though it was to her.

She was almost sobbing when she reached the dingy doorway beyond which worn wooden stairs, uncarpeted and unclean, led up to the rooms she called "home." Her lips were quivering, and there were tears in her eyes.

Like a fawn, she sprung up the steps, reached the top floor and burst into a room.

A gray-haired man turned to meet her, a look of astonishment on his kindly and rugged old face.

"Nellie!"

"Oh, grandfather!"

She fell, half-fainting, into his arms, sobbing hysterically, while he was struck dumb with wonder.

"What is the meaning of this, little pet?" he finally asked. "Tell me, has anything happened? What is it, dear? What has brought my little flower home in this strange manner?"

"Oh, grandfather! thank God, it was not true!"

"True—what true? What are you speaking of, child?"

"Oh, he told me you had been injured so fearfully—that they had taken you to the hospital!"

The old man was amazed.

"Who told you that, Nellie?"

"A stranger—a man of a dark face and a black mustache and imperial."

A strange look passed over the man's face, and he started violently.

"What was his name?"

"He did not say."

"Where did he find you?"

"Near City Hall Park."

"Was he an American?"

"No; he was a foreigner. I could tell that by his talk!"

"How did he know of me?"

"I do not know. He came and looked into my face in a very strange manner, and then he asked me if my name was Nell Spaulding. When I told him it was, he said I was the very girl he was looking for—said you had been injured and taken to the hospital. He declared you sent him to bring me."

"You did not go with him?"

"No. He went for a cab to take me in, and a strange boy came and told me he was deceiving me—told me not to go with the man in that cab."

"God bless that boy!" fervently exclaimed the old man, shaking like a leaf. "God bless him! He saved you!"

"Saved me? From what?"

"From the worst enemy you have in all the world—from the man I have feared so many years."

"Felipe Murella?"

"Yes, for I am sure it was that wretch who tried to get you into the cab. I thought he had left New York forever, else I would not have allowed you on the street alone to sell flowers."

The girl looked frightened.

"Oh, grandfather! why is that man my enemy? What have I ever done to him that he should be my enemy?"

"Nothing, little puss. But, he robbed you of your rights. If you had what was rightfully yours to-day, you would be living in a mansion, instead of this wretched place. Girl, you are an heiress, but this man defrauded you of everything!"

"How?"

"By craft—by deceit—by *murder*, perhaps!"

"I do not understand, grandfather."

"You should know. I cannot tell you the whole story, for I do not know the whole truth. I have told you your poor father owned a very valuable mine in Northern Mexico, where he died. This Murella was his partner—they owned it together. As near as I can make out, Murella had a third interest. Of a sudden, your father died, and Murella owned everything. He had even been appointed your guardian by your father. He came here to New York and put the stock of the Little Nell Mine on the market. Then there was a great cave-in in the mine, and the stock slumped, which caused him to withdraw it. I know not what he has done with it since."

"But, that wretched villain of a Spaniard tried to take you from me. He had the papers making him your guardian, and he would have held you entirely in his power to-day had I not hidden you where he could not find you. I thought him gone from New York, forever, I hoped, and so, in these hard times, when I had lost my job, I allowed you to venture out and sell flowers on the street. It was foolish of me."

"Why do you say this man defrauded me by murder, perhaps?"

"Well," and a stern look settled on old Thomas Howard's face, "I have sometimes thought he may have killed your father, dear."

The girl uttered a cry and placed her hands over her face, shuddering with horror.

"Forgive me, pet—forgive!" exclaimed

the man, his arm about her. "Oh, you are so like my own child—like your sainted mother! I ought not to have told you!"

Little Nell lowered her hands and looked into his face, a brave expression in her eyes.

"It was right; I am glad I know. Oh, the wretch! How I hate him!"

The old man led her to a chair. They sat down, and for a long time they talked of Little Nell's dead father and mother. He told her everything he knew of Felipe Murella, and she listened, a grim look on her sweet young face.

Nell did not venture out of the house again until the dusk of evening was gathering in the streets, and the lamps had begun to gleam. Then, her grandfather being asleep, she took her remaining flowers and slipped down the stairs.

"I must sell these some way," was her thought. "We cannot afford to lose what they cost us."

So she stood on the Bowery, selling the little bunches for five cents, or even three cents, when she could not get five, until they were all gone.

Then, feeling somewhat relieved and lighter hearted, she purchased a loaf of bread at a bake-shop and hurried home.

Just before she reached the door that opened on the stairs leading up to her home, she saw a wretched and ghastly-faced old man, who stared at the end of the loaf of bread, which showed where the paper had broken open, as if he longed to leap for it. He was trembling violently, and there was such a greedy, appealing look in his eyes that she involuntarily halted.

She heard his lips huskily mutter:

"Bread! bread—and I'm starving!"

"Poor man!" she said, kindly. "Are you hungry?"

"Oh, so hungry!" he replied. "Why should I be so hungry when I am dead?"

"If you will come with me you shall have something to eat. Will you come?"

"Thank God! I'll come! A kind boy gave me a sandwich, but a dog snatched it from my very lips. And I could not catch the dog! It was terrible!"

Little Nell's tender heart was touched.

"Let me help you," she said.

Taking his arm, she helped him along to the door.

"It is only a short distance up the stairs. I will aid you, sir."

"And I can have something to eat when I get up there? Oh, I'll climb—I'll do *anything* for something to eat!"

It was a very hard climb for the shaking old fellow, but he succeeded, with the girl's help, in reaching the rooms above.

Thomas Howard had just awakened and was about to hurry out, having missed his granddaughter. He uttered an exclamation of relief when he saw her enter, but he was astonished at the sight of the pale and tottering old man she brought in with her.

"Who is this, Nellie?" he asked.

"A poor old man who is very hungry, grandfather. He saw my bread, and I brought him here to have something to eat."

"Well," said Howard, slowly, looking at the pale-faced man who had sunk panting on a chair, "he shall have something, for he seems to be on the point of death."

"I am dead already," asserted the strange old beggar. "I have been dead very long. Perhaps you can tell me why a dead man should be hungry? I do not understand it."

Thomas Howard shook his head, looking concerned. To Nell, he whispered, in an aside:

"His misery has turned his head. He does not know what he says."

The girl hastily set the table, the strange man watching her every movement, when he was not staring fiercely at the food. It was plain he refrained with difficulty from grasp-

ing a loaf of bread and cramming it into his mouth.

At length, everything was ready, and Thomas Howard said:

"Sit right up to the table, old man. We will eat now."

The stranger promptly accepted the invitation, but, just as Nell and her grandfather were on the point of sitting down, there came a sudden knock on the door.

The old man had picked up a bread knife, and with it in his right hand, he turned to the door, which was abruptly and violently thrown open.

The lamplight shone full on the man who stood in the doorway.

It was the Man from Mexico, Felipe Murella!

Little Nell gave a cry of fear.

"That is the man who lied to me!" came from her lips—"the man who said you were hurt, grandfather!"

Thomas Howard lifted his left hand and pointed accusingly straight at the face of the Spaniard.

"Look at him, Little Nell!" cried the old man, wildly. "That is the wretch who robbed you of your fortune!"

CHAPTER IX.

"ONLY A BOY."

A HARSH laugh came from the Spaniard's lips, and he stepped boldly into the room.

"You're a crazy old fool!" he declared.

"Why I rob de girl? How I rob her, ha?"

"Back!" shouted Thomas Howard, flourishing the knife. "I know you, Murella! Attempt to touch that child and I will bury this blade in your black heart!"

"Bah! You t'ink I fear you? Nevare! You be crazy, or you gif de girl a fair show."

"What do you mean by that, dog?"

"Have de vera good care!" snarled Felipe, showing his teeth. "You call me dog-a, mebbe you vish you had nevar do eet!"

"You are a dog—a coward—a—"

"Oh, grandfather!" gasped Little Nell, terrified. "Please stop!"

The ghastly pale man seated at the table seemed to have forgotten his food, hungry though he was, for he stared wildly, fearfully at the intrusive Spaniard. He seemed stricken motionless with a great terror.

"Let de old fool talk!" grated the Man from Mexico, glaring at Howard. "He veel cut hees own t'roat—eef not, somebody cut eet for heem."

"That threat is like you, miserable cur!" shouted Howard. "You have a fancy to cut throats! I do not doubt you cut the throat of Bartley Spaulding!"

"Now, you talk fooleesh! Dat man die natural death."

"He died suddenly."

"Dat ees never strange in Mexico."

"A land of murderous Indians, mongrel Spaniards and white ruffians."

"Oh, you talk vera bold—you nevar fear me von beet. Vera well; sometime you change your song. I have come here to claim my right."

"What is that?"

"Dat girl."

"You have no right to her!"

"Dat ees not true. Her fazare make me her guardian teel she be twenty-one. You steal her away—you keep her heed. I make you pay for dat!"

"I am her grandfather!"

"Dat make no diffrence."

"I do not believe her father ever gave you charge of her."

"Dat make no diffrence."

The Spaniard was recovering his composure, and he was now cold and sneering.

"If you touch her, you will have to kill me first!" burst from the excited old man's lips, as he wildly flourished the long bread-knife.

"I keel you vera easy," retorted the Spaniard, a devilish light in his eyes.

"You think so because I am an old man; but I have not yet lost all my strength, and the good God will give me more to defend this innocent lamb from your defiling touch!"

"You call on God! Bah!" and Felipe snapped his fingers, contemptuously. "Dat I care for God! I vill haf dat child!"

"What do you want of her?"

"Vell, von t'ing, she ees pritee."

With a roar that was terrible, Thomas Howard flung himself headlong at the throat of the Spaniard, striking wildly with the knife.

Only by a swift movement did Murella escape the thrust, and a perfect string of Spanish imprecations broke from his lips. With his fist, he struck the man behind the ear, staggering Howard a moment.

A sudden wild howl that was awful to hear sounded through the room, and the strange man who had been seated at the table came straight at Felipe, screaming:

"Devil! I know you for my worst enemy! You shall die, die, die!"

A signal pealed from Murella's lips, as he barely avoided the unexpected attack. As he uttered a cry, the door was suddenly thrown open once more, and two men came rushing in.

They were Sonora Dan and Injun Jack.

"At de fools!" cried Murella. "Give dem feets!"

The Westerner had a heavy revolver in his hand, and, turning it swiftly, he struck a sudden blow at the head of the strange old man of the ghastly face.

He made no miscalculation. The butt of the weapon struck the man's bare head, and, without a cry or a groan, the unfortunate was hurled forward on his face. He lay still, fairly knocked senseless.

In the mean time, the half-blood had grappled with Joseph Howard. Injun Jack had the strength of a giant and the swiftness of a panther. Lifting Howard off his feet, the coppery villain dashed him to the floor.

As Howard went down, his head struck against the table, and he was also stunned.

While this was occurring, Felipe Murella had not been idle. He grasped Little Nell, hissing:

"Keep steel! You veel not be hurt."

But, the girl struggled and screamed once or twice.

Sonora Dan sprang to the aid of the Spaniard, and the girl was like a babe in the hands of the two men. They held her helpless, the hand of the Westerner covering her mouth, while Felipe bound her hands and feet. This being accomplished, a rude gag was roughly thrust into her mouth.

The girl had ceased her struggling, her strength seeming to be gone.

"See eef de vay ees clear, Senor Dan," commanded Felipe, and the Western ruffian slipped from the room.

Injun Jack stood by the door, looking around. The pallid face of the old man who had fought so fiercely for his grandchild was plainly revealed by the lamplight, but the other man had fallen face downward beneath the table, so neither the Westerner nor the half-blood obtained a fair view of his features.

In a few seconds, Sonora Dan came back, saying:

"All right, Murella. Thar waz some critters as wuz listenin' ter see w'ot ther racket meant, but I told them it wuz only a crazy man, an' they've gone inter their holes. Ther stairs is dark, an' we kin slip down easy."

"Dat ees good! I haf de girl, at last! Ha!"

The Western desperado led the way, Felipe following closely. The half-blood lingered a moment, as the man who had fallen with his head in the shadow beneath the

table stirred somewhat. A terrible look flashed through Injun Jack's beady eyes, and his hand sought the haft of a hidden knife, but the crazy wretch did not rise, and his life was spared.

Down the dark stairs went the three thugs, bearing the half-fainting girl.

A closed cab was drawn up at the curb.

Sonora Dan darted out and opened the door, then, watching his opportunity, the Spaniard came swiftly forward with the girl in his arms. He had chosen his time well, and scarcely a glance was attracted toward him, while no one noticed the girl's hands and feet were bound and there was a gag in her mouth.

Once inside the cab, Murella laughed with glee.

Sonora Dan had followed Murella closely, and Injun Jack also entered the cab. The door was closed and the driver, who had plainly received his instructions beforehand, whipped up.

Not twenty minutes later, a boy came up the Bowery and mounted the dark stairs.

"This is the place where she said she lived," muttered the voice of Spotter Bob, as he stopped at the door on which Little Nell had told him to knock. "She will be surprised to see me so soon."

He rapped, but received no answer. After repeating the knock, the lad tried the door.

It opened to his touch.

The sight revealed to Bob Braddock's eyes filled him with amazement.

On the floor an old man lay stretched, motionless, apparently dead.

At the table sat another old man, and the latter was greedily, fiercely stuffing bread into his mouth, his whole manner being that of a ravenous beast.

The Spotter recognized the latter. It was the man he had saved from the young thugs—the man for whom he had bought a sandwich.

"Hello!" broke from the lad's lips. "What's the meanin' of this?"

The man at the table made no reply, still continuing to stuff the bread into his mouth. Bob entered.

"Look here, old chap!" he cried; "have you been killin' somebody fer a square feed?"

Then he saw a streak of blood trickling slowly and sluggishly down the cheek of the pallid man, and he added:

"Ten ter one, it was a free fight! Well, a man is hard up when he'll fight for a bite of grub like that. Wonder if he has killed t'other old feller?"

Dropping on his knees, Bob made an examination of the man on the floor, all the while watching the old fellow of the ghastly face, who was eating at the table.

Thomas Howard stirred and groaned.

"Not dead!" cried Bob. "He's comin' round!"

A few seconds later, Howard opened his eyes and stared blankly around.

"What has happened?" was his question. "My head! I was struck!"

Then, with Bob's assistance, he sat up.

"I guess you're all right now, sir," encouragingly observed the boy. "How do you feel?"

"Something is wrong—something has happened! What?"

The eyes of Howard fell on the man who was still greedily devouring the bread, and he instantly cried:

"My God! I remember! Little Nell—where is she?"

A moment later, he was on his feet, staggering wildly about the room, calling to the girl.

"She is gone," said the hollow voice of the man at the table. "That evil wretch of the dark face took her away—he has stolen her! He is a monster! He killed me! Oh, the terrible darkness!—oh, the rats, the rats!"

He cowered back in his chair, shaking like

a leaf in the wind, utterly overcome with terror.

Spotter Bob caught Nell's grandfather by the arm.

"Where is she?" he demanded, with a strange fierceness. "What has become of her?"

The old man dropped into a chair, covering his face with his hands, and sobbing like a child.

"That wretch has her!" he gasped.

"Who?"

"The man who murdered her father!"

"The Spanish rip—Felipe Murella?"

"Yes."

A groan was wrung from the lips of the boy, as he began to understand what had happened. Wildly he questioned the girl's grandfather, and Howard brokenly told him what had occurred in that room.

"More work for me!" cried the boy, a stern look settling on his handsome face. "I'll round up this whelp of sin, or my name ain't Bob Braddock!"

"What can we do?" questioned Thomas Howard, who seemed utterly broken down by the terrible calamity.

"Do? I'll git track of the villain—I'll run him down! Do? We'll prove he murdered Bartley Spaulding! We'll see him behind the bars inside of two weeks!"

"But you are only a boy."

"Only a boy, but a holy terror to crookedness when I get started. I know a few things that'll make old Murella sweat, and sweat hard!"

"Kill him!" wildly cried the man of the ghostly face—"kill him, as he killed me!"

"I'll save Little Nell, or bu'st a suspender tryin'!" declared Spotter Bob.

CHAPTER X.

CAUGHT.

BUT there was no such a thing as getting trace of the lost girl that night.

Spotter Bob searched high and low for Felipe Murella, but he was forced to "take a snooze," with nothing accomplished.

Another day brought him round to the girl's poor home on the Bowery, but she was not there, and he did not find Thomas Howard. The old man was still out in the streets somewhere, searching for the abducted heiress, and the rooms stood wide open.

Bob was about to depart, when something stirred in a dark corner, and he saw a ghastly face and pair of gleaming eyes rise up before him. As he started back, a hollow voice cried:

"Why do you come here to disturb the dead? It was so dark last night—and twice I heard the rats gnawing and squealing! Oh, the terrible rats!"

"Hello!" exclaimed the boy. "Is it you, Old Ghost? Did you stop here last night?"

Instead of replying, the man arose slowly to his feet, mumbling:

"Yesterday I saw the man who killed me! I knew him, although I have not looked on his face for years. I shall find him again, and then—"

He smote his shaking hands together. It was a threat, but who could fear that weak and trembling old man?

In vain the Spotter tried to get the deranged creature to answer questions. The man's mind seemed to dwell on the fact that he had seen somebody he fancied killed him long years before.

Finally Bob gave it up, and left him there.

The boy had decided on the course he would pursue, and he at once sought the vile alley on Canal street, where he had tracked Sonora Dan and the Spaniard the day before.

"Here I will watch," he said.

Finding a position where he could watch

the mouth of the alley without being seen, he ensconced himself there and waited.

Bob was of a lively, impatient nature, and the minutes dragged away like lead. Finally, when he could stand it no longer, he sneaked into the alley and crept up the stairs to the floor where he had been used as a target by the Western ruffian.

Into the room where he had been captured by the half blood he slipped, his heart beating swiftly, for he knew he would not be liable to get away so easily if captured again.

All was silent in that wretched old hovel, save for the sound of a beery voice away below singing a mixed up stanza of "Daisy Bell."

Another chair was placed beneath the knot-hole, and the boy was soon peering through.

The next room seemed to be empty.

The Spotter was disappointed, for the thought that the Westerner and Injun Jack had "skipped," struck him "all in a heap."

"I'll find out!" he mentally resolved.

Then he did a rather rash thing.

Stepping down from the chair, he glided from the room and tried the door of the next.

It opened to his touch.

Looking into that room, he discovered it was really deserted.

"Gone!" gasped the lad, in dismay.

What was to be done?

"I'll find them yet!" cried the Spotter, resolutely. "Little Nell must be saved!"

The appearance of the room seemed to indicate the late occupants would not return.

Bob entered and looked around everywhere.

The gleam of something down in a dark corner caught his eye, and, picking it up, he found a curiously-shaped knife in his hand.

"What's this?" muttered the lad. "I never saw a knife just like that before."

Although he did not know it, it was the scalping-knife of the Navajo Indians.

After a time, the lad decided it must belong to the half-blood or Sonora Dan.

"In that case," said he, "they will return here for it. If I watch, I may get track of them."

The thought that he might be found in that room was far from pleasant, and he lost no time in getting out, leaving the knife on the floor in the very corner where he had discovered it.

Down the stairs he went, making his way out of the alley, to which there was but one entrance. In a short time, he was once more concealed where he could watch that entrance.

Two hours passed, and still no sign of those for whom he was waiting. The forenoon was advancing swiftly, and Spotter Bob realized he was hungry, for he had eaten no breakfast.

Before another hour passed, a man came down from the Bowery with the tread of a cat and the springy step of a fawn. His face was of a light coppery hue, and his eyes were dark as the starless night.

"Ah!" muttered Spotter Bob, with a thrill of satisfaction. "The Indian has come, at last!"

It was the half-blood, and he disappeared into the dirty alley.

"So that was *his* knife!" said Bob. "Well, I am mighty glad he dropped it there."

In a short time, Injun Jack reappeared. He turned toward the Bowery, and there was a boy tracking him like a hound.

There was no more skillful trailer in all New York than Spotter Bob, and the way he kept track of the half-blood was an artistic success, for the Indian appeared rather suspicious, now and then looking all about him and stopping suddenly to glance back.

Not once did he detect the boy.

"Oh, I'm a little fly myself, at times!" chuckled Bob, as he concealed himself be-

hind a sidewalk sign and watched the half-blood looking around. "I'll guarantee I'm right ter home on this kind of business."

At Spring street Sonora Dan was waiting for his half-blood pard.

Bob watched the two ruffians, red and white, as they talked together earnestly. They seemed to be waiting there for some one who was late in appearing.

"If it should be the Seenyaw!" thought the boy, his heart rising.

The Spaniard it proved to be, and he finally appeared, sauntering leisurely and boldly down the Bowery, coolly smoking a cigarette, as if the abduction of pretty girls was a regular and legitimate business.

"Oh, I'm enter you!" grated the young shadower. "I'll stick to you like a burdock to a mule's tail!"

For a few moments the trio spoke together, and then Felipe beckoned them into a saloon.

"I'd give something to hear what they're sayin'," thought the boy, as he lingered near the saloon.

A newsboy came along with a bundle of papers he had failed to sell.

"Hey, there," called the Spotter. "W'at'll yer take fer that bundle of back num bers?"

"W'at'll yer give?" was the counter question.

"Ten cents."

"Cough it up! Dey're yours!"

The trade was soon made, and changing the expression of his face so that he looked very little like himself, Bob darted for the door of the saloon, entering boldly and without the least hesitation.

He did not call out papers in a loud voice and attract the attention of every one, but, pretending to be very anxious to do business, he spoke to several customers of the saloon in a low tone, saying he had failed to dispose of his morning papers, and asking them if they would kindly purchase one.

He actually sold a paper in the place, and, while he was doing it, he discovered the trio of rascals were in a little private room at the back. The door had been closed, but the sharp-eared boy heard, for a moment, Sonora Dan's voice raised to a pitch that brought the sound to the main room without making his words distinguishable.

The Spotter immediately slipped over to the little room, leaning against the thin partition. To divert suspicion, Bob began to count over his money, as if he was discovering how much he had made that morning.

Within the private room, Sonora Dan and Felipe Murella were engaged in a somewhat heated discussion. Now and then, the listener could catch a few words, and he soon decided they were wrangling about money.

"Ther Spanish varlet's payin' ther Westerner an' ther Injun fer ther dirty work they helped him do," was Bob's decision. "They have struck him heavy, an' he's kickin' like a mule."

As he listened, he discovered the Spaniard finally pacified Dan by paying a portion of what he had promised, and giving his word to complete the payment at an early date.

"That's a trick of his," thought the lad. "He's goin' ter bluff 'em off. He'll never pay 'em any more, an' they oughter know it."

He hoped to hear something about the girl but in this he met with disappointment.

At length, Bob decided the men were about to leave the little room, and he lost no time in slipping from the saloon.

On the street, he took up a position where he could watch the front and side doors of the place, being determined none of the party should leave without he saw them.

In a doorway near by Bob saw a fierce-faced, ruffianly-looking fellow lurking. The man's face was a fiery-red hue, as if he had been burned and blistered by a scorching sun. He seemed waiting for some one.

Pretty soon, Sonora Dan and Injun Jack came from the saloon and went away up the Bowery.

Almost immediately, the Spaniard came quickly out to the street, and the man of the fiery face hurried to his side. Bob was so near that he heard Felipe excitedly hiss:

"Dem ees de men, Mike! You put dem bote out of de vay, I pay you two hundred dollar! Dey be vera dangerous men to tackle. You try eet, ha?"

"Bet yer life, ef dat two hundred's goin' ter come in. Jest you trust Blazer Mike, der Swiper. I'll sock 'em fer keeps before another day!"

"De money ees yours de moment you prove to me dat!" guardedly exclaimed Murella. "Now go! Don't let dem sleep you!"

"Count on der Swiper, an' hav yer cash reddy ter-morrer."

With that, the hired murderer started after the men he had agreed to assassinate, and Felipe stood watching until they were out of sight. There was a devilish smile on the face of the dastardly and treacherous Spaniard, and he muttered:

"Dey hold de secret—dey try to work eet on me! Ha! I am bad man to fool vid! Dat hired dog-a keel dem bote!"

"Well, you are a whelp!" thought the listening boy. "If ever there was a human devil, you're one!"

The Spotter would have warned Sonora Dan and the half-blood of their danger, ruffians though they were, but it was impossible to do so then without losing track of Murella, and, if he lost the Spaniard, his hope of finding Little Nell soon would be gone.

Pretty soon Felipe sauntered leisurely down the Bowery.

Bob followed.

Before long, the Spaniard entered another saloon.

"Wonder what he went in there for?" thought the lad. "Has he a date to meet somebody else, or is he bracin' hard with drinks?"

The Spotter remained outside and watched for a long time, but Murella did not come out. The boy's impatience grew with each passing minute, and he began to fear the Man from Mexico had given him the slip in some way.

At last he resolved to know if this was true. With the bundle of papers still under his arm, he swiftly entered the saloon.

Barely had he passed through the door when he felt himself clutched by sinewy hands, and a hateful voice hissed in his ears:

"Little sneak! I catch you dis time, and I hold you fast! Ha!"

He had run fairly into the hands of Felipe Murella!

CHAPTER XI.

A CROOKED POLICEMAN.

"LEGGO!"

Bob uttered the cry, as he squirmed to break from the grasp of the Spaniard.

"Nevar! You follow me, ha? I make you vish you never done dat!"

The inmates of the saloon looked on with wonder, seeing the boy squirming and fighting to break from the grasp of the man of the dark face and evil eyes.

"W'at's the matter wid ther kid?" growled the barkeeper.

"He be von leetle t'ief!" declared Murella.

"It's a lie!" promptly declared Bob.

"He steal my vatch."

"I say it's a lie!"

"You say eet ees lie, but eet is de trute. Oh, I feex you dis time!"

Bob looked around appealingly, and then his eyes fell on a siphon bottle filled with seltzer. With one quick clutch, he secured the bottle. And then—

Fiz-z-z!—swish!

A stream of seltzer struck Felipe fairly in the face and eyes, blinding him for the moment and causing him to release his hold on the boy.

With a triumphant cry, Bob dropped the bottle and darted from the saloon.

He heard a roar of laughter behind him, and, mingling with it, a string of furious Spanish exclamations. The witnesses of the scene were laughing at Murella, and the Man from Mexico was literally beside himself with rage.

Bob knew Felipe would soon be bursting from the saloon in pursuit, and he darted away into the moving throng of people. Not till he had run more than a block did he realize he might lose sight of the Spaniard entirely, and then he wheeled squarely about and hurried back.

Too late! The Spaniard had left the saloon, and no one knew which way he went.

The witnesses of the affair were inclined to make a hero of Bob, for they were of the class that thoroughly enjoys anything of the kind, but the boy hurried away to see if he could not find Murella on the Bowery.

He did not. The man had disappeared completely for the time, and, with a heavy heart, the lad gave over the hope of tracking him straight to the spot where he had taken Little Nell.

One of the morning papers had obtained some of the particulars of the girl's abduction, but the story printed was curt and far from correct. Bob imagined the reporter heard it from the lips of Howard when the old man was in a state of excitement that rendered it impossible for him to relate anything correctly.

All day Bob wandered about the city, hoping against hope that he might see the Spaniard somewhere.

He did not.

The day passed and another night came, while the fate of Little Nell was still unknown.

The boy Spotter longed to see Howard, and he crept up to the door of the man's room. It stood open on a crack, and through the aperture Bob saw Nell's grandfather walking the floor, a look of fierce despair on his rugged old face. That look was enough to tell the lad the girl was still missing, but he heard the man groan and cry out:

"Is there a God who will permit such things? Oh, my little darling—my lost one!"

With a lump in his throat and tears in his eyes, the boy slipped down the stairs and found himself on the Bowery again.

"I said I'd find her, an' I've gotter keep my word!" came through his clinched teeth. "I'll find Murella, the skunk, or break ther combination!"

But, how was it to be done? He had lost track of Sonora Dan and the half-blood, as well as the Spaniard.

The next morning, the papers contained a startling sensation.

A man had been found on the Bowery with a gash in his heart and his scalp torn from his head!

The scalping had been done in a manner that seemed to indicate it was the work of a trained hand.

That man was Blazer Mike, the Swiper!

Felipe Murella's hired assassin had met his fate at the hands of the meri he was to slay.

Spotter Bob knew this the moment he read the account of the strange discovery, and a thrill of mingled horror and satisfaction passed over him.

The paper said the scalping had been done as neatly as if it were the work of an Indian warrior on the plains, but, without doubt, some of the Swiper's former pals, who had now turned against him, were responsible.

"Injun Jack done it, I'll bet a house!" muttered Bob. "An' he done it with that very knife I found in the lodgin' house of the night-hawkers."

He was right.

Had he felt thus disposed, the boy could have given the police a valuable clue, but he chose to keep his own counsel, as it really seemed the murderous thug had received scarcely more than he merited.

In looking through the paper to see if the police had discovered anything about the missing girl, Little Nell, the boy saw a brief item that stated the girl's grandfather had accused a certain Spanish gentleman, who was more or less well known in New York because of his handling of mining stock.

The name of the Spaniard was not given, but that was not necessary for Bob, as the item stated the police were on the outlook for the party.

"Let me git my eyes on him again!" thought the lad.

And, within an hour, he did!

Once more Felipe Murella came sauntering down the Bowery, coolly smoking his hand-rolled cigarette, seeming to feel himself perfectly safe there.

"Wonder if he knows w'at's in the paper?" thought Bob.

The boy followed Murella, watching for a policeman. To his intense surprise, the Spaniard coolly approached an officer and began talking with him.

"Well, that *is* gall!" gasped the shadow.

As soon as he could recover from his first astonishment, he darted forward and attracted the attention of the policeman.

"Hi!" he called, excitedly. "Know who this cove is w'at ye're talkin' to?"

Murella uttered a snarl, while the officer seemed intensely astonished.

"This moke is ther 'Spanish gentleman' w'at kerried off ther gal on the Bowery two nights ago!" the Spotter went on, not giving Felipe a chance to stop him. "He's ther one the police is instructed ter pinch fu'st pop. Grab him, officer, an' you git the glory! Don't let him git away from ye!"

"Leetle wretch!" fumed the Man from Mexico, leaping forward and grasping Bob. "I have you now!"

"An' the perlice'll have *you*!" cut in the lad. "Arrest him, Mr. Officer! I'll swear he is the critter w'at I said!"

"And I veel svare dis leetle rat steal my vatch, offisare," came from the Spaniard's lips. "I have try to catch heem two day; now I haf heem. I vant heem arrest."

"You make the charge of theft against him?" questioned the policeman.

"I do, sare."

"All right; I'll run him in." The policeman's hand fell on Bob's arm.

For a moment the lad was utterly astounded by this turn in events, and then he madly cried:

"This is an outrage! If you arrest me, you will have to take him, Mr. Cop! I'll go along an' stan' ther racket fer the fun of seein' him pinched."

Murella's hand came out of his pocket, with something yellow in the palm. The policeman seemed to understand, and the hands of the two men met, while the Spaniard said something in a low tone.

"Come along here, you young rascal!" growled the policeman, as he gave Bob a jerk. "You'll do for an example. This man has made a charge against you."

"And I have made a charge against him," put in the boy. "I insist that you arrest him, officer! He is wanted!"

"Oh, come off! You're too flip!"

With that the policeman dragged the boy down the street, while Murella was left to walk away unmolested.

"And this is justice in New York!" thought the Spotter. "In this case, we've got to fight the perlice, as well as ther Spaniard!"

The officer pretended he intended to take the boy to the station, but, after a few minutes, he said:

"I'll go hard with you, if you go before the judge."

Bob made no reply. He knew words were useless.

"I hate ter see a kid sent up to do time," continued the hypocritical servant of law and order. "I'll just let up my grip a bit, youngster, and you make a sneak."

To the officer's astonishment, the boy replied:

"I won't! I insist on being taken to the station-house!"

"You do?"

"Sure."

"What for?"

"Wasn't I arrested?"

"Yes."

"Well, didn't that sneakin' Spaniard say I swiped his tucker?"

"He did."

"Well, you ain't got any right ter let me skip, an' I decline to skip a little bit."

"You young fool!"

"No compliments, please!"

"You don't know what a show I'm givin' ye."

"Don't?"

"No."

"I know you didn't give me any show at all. You did me dirty, an' now I want to see the judge."

"What for?"

"I've got a few t'ings ter tell him."

"Well, I can't waste my time takin' you in. You can go. Git!"

"I don't want ter git."

"I'll give ye a rappin' over ther shins with me stick if ye don't!"

The officer brandished his club ominously, and Bob sidled away, observing:

"You're a beaut—you are! I'm dead on ter you! You accepted a bribe from the Spaniard, an' I saw yer. I've got yer number, an', w'en I git time, I'm goin' ter see you are reported. I'll break you some day, see if I don't, Mr. Crooked Perliceman!"

With a fierce exclamation, the officer started for Bob, and the boy darted away.

CHAPTER XII.

IN THE CAB.

Two hours later, Bob spotted Sonora Dan. "Hello, beauty!" muttered the lad, in delight. "I'm dead in it again!"

He kept the Western ruffian in view, wondering where Injun Jack could be. It was possible the half-blood was keeping out of sight until the excitement over the discovery of the scalpless dead tough, Blazer Mike, subsided.

This, however, did not prove to be true, for Dan soon met his coppery-hued pard.

The boy managed to get near enough to hear some of the words which passed between them. He saw the Westerner was in a fearful rage, while the look on the half-blood's face was far from pleasant to contemplate.

"He has played us, curse him!" came harshly from the lips of Sonora Dan.

"So," nodded the half-blood, curtly.

"What shall we do?"

"Use the knife!"

"Let's not be too hasty, pard. Let's give ther varmint one more chance. Ef we do him too quick, we'll end our chance of squeezin' any more cash out of him."

"Give um time, um set 'nother fool after us."

"You can serve ther critter as ye did t'other one, only don't lift his ha'r, Thet thar wuz foolish."

"Why?"

"It might hev brung ther perlice hot foot arter us."

Injun Jack made a gesture of contempt.

"They like Johnny soldier in fort—they no count."

"Don't you think that, pard. Ef they git arter yer, you'll find it dern hard slippin' them. Ther next thing is ter find Murella."

"Yes; he sneak away like thief."

"Thet's what he did, an' he moved ther gal, and now we must find her. That is our next work, Injun. This whelp may try ter git her out of ther city an' skip us thet thar way. We must not let him."

"Not much!"

"Then we must divide and hunt fer ther varmint. No time is to be lost. Ef you find ther gal an' kin git her, do it. Thet'll give us a holt on the Greaser skunk," and the two unsavory confederates in villainy parted.

Spotter Bob was disheartened by learning that Murella had played his once chosen tools false and again spirited Little Nell away. The boy had hoped to follow the men straight to the spot where the girl was concealed.

As it was, he resolved to shadow one of them, and something caused him to select the Indian.

And fortune led the half-blood straight to the man he sought.

A cab was drawn up before a somber-looking house on Grand street, and Injun Jack saw Senor Felipe Murella talking earnestly to the driver.

The half blood halted and watched, himself unseen by the treacherous Spaniard.

Pretty soon, Murella turned from the cab and hurried into the house, at which, like a fox, Injun Jack glided forward.

The youthful Bob was not far behind.

The red rascal stepped into a doorway near the cab, and there waited, while the boy, in a doorway on the opposite side of the street, had the red-skin under surveillance.

Spotter and spotted had not long to wait.

Murella came out of the house, and Bob Braddock gasped with astonishment when he saw the person with the bold and villainous Spaniard, for, although that person's face was hidden by a heavy veil, the Spotter could not doubt it was the lost heiress.

"Little Nell, or I'm a chump!" broke guardedly from the lad's lips. "Murella means to take her from the city! He must be stopped some way! How?"

That was a hard question to answer, and the boy was shaking with excitement and suspense. He did not dare call on the police, as his recent experience warned him how useless such a course would be.

From his position, he saw Injun Jack start and bend forward, glaring at the Spaniard and the veiled girl. Bob wondered what the half blood would do, but he was not long kept in uncertainty.

Murella hurried the girl to the cab, speaking something to her in a low tone. She appeared perfectly willing to obey him, but Bob saw he kept hold of her arm. There was nothing about the appearance of the pair to attract special notice from those who were passing.

The Man from Mexico opened the door of the cab and helped the girl in. He was about to follow her when something happened to prevent him.

Like a leaping panther, Injun Jack came from the doorway. He held something in his hand, and with it, he struck Murella a crushing blow hurling the man in a heap on the walk.

Up over the wheels to the seat of the cab went the supple and muscular half-blood, and then the astounded driver was sent whirling head over heels into the street, striking on his head and shoulders.

Spotter Bob had not been idle, astonished though he was by what happened. He darted toward the cab, having no particular object in view, but being determined to do something.

The half-blood had caught the reins from the driver's hands, and he snatched up the whip, uttering a yell that nearly frightened the horses out of their harness. Swish!—crack! the whip fell on the terrified animals, and they leaped forward.

Barely was the Spotter able to swing himself into the open door of the cab as it went

thundering along the street, but he succeeded, thanks to the swiftness with which he had darted forward when he saw something unusual and unexpected was happening. He closed the door, hearing the wild shouts of the astounded spectators of the remarkable scene.

No one but a wild Indian would have dared attempt such a feat in the open light of day on Grand street, but the half-blood was ready for any daring venture. As the cab bounced and rumbled over the stones, Injun Jack looked back to see if he was pursued. He saw a blue coated figure running wildly along the street, with twenty other men in citizens' clothes at his heels, and another thrilling yell pealed from the half-blood's lips while he stood straight up and made the whip crack and cut the horses underneath.

The animals were galloping madly along the crowded thoroughfare, and the drivers of other teams took care to make way for it.

Inside the cab Bob Braddock hastened to lift the veil so he could see the face of the girl.

"Little Nell!" he cried. "It is you!"

She seemed to awaken from a trance.

"What is it? Where are we going?" she cried, terrified.

"Don't you be scared," urged the young Spotter, earnestly. "Jest you trust to me. I'm goin' to stick to you as long as I can gasp a breath, you bet!"

"Oh, you are the boy who warned me against Felipe Murella!"

"I be."

"Where are we?"

"In a cab. Jest you set still."

With a little shuddering cry, she flung her arms about his neck, sobbing:

"You won't let him touch me again? I am so afraid of him!"

"He sha'n't touch ye, Little Nell!" bravely assured Bob, thrilling as he felt her convulsive clutch.

"Oh, you are brave—you are good! Last night I dreamed of you. You were the knight who came to save me! It was like a story, and I—I—I thought—" She hesitated in the greatest confusion.

"What did ye think, Little Nell?" eagerly asked the boy, for the moment forgetting their situation.

"I—I thought *we were married!*"

"No such luck as that fer me!" returned the boy, although he was trembling with a new emotion that was not fear, by any means. "I'm only a common boy, and you—"

"I am a girl. Who knows—"

She said no more, but already the flame in Bob Braddock's heart was sending the hot blood to every part of his body. Never before in all his life had he experienced such a strange sensation of unutterable joy. He looked on the sweet face of the innocent and beautiful young girl and swore he would willingly give up his life to save her a single moment of unhappiness.

And Little Nell's heart was fluttering like a wounded bird in her bosom. She, too, had for the moment forgotten the strangeness of their situation and the fact that they were in peril. She still clung to Bob, looking trustingly into his face, and her breath seemed to intoxicate him for the moment.

"You can't mean it!" he exclaimed, his arms closing about her waist. "You do not care for me—Nellie?"

"Why should I dream of you?"

"I don't know."

"And I am sure you are brave and good."

A jolt of the cab brought their lips near together, and, governed by a sudden mad impulse, the boy kissed her fairly on the mouth.

Then they heard the clanging of a bell, hoarse shouts of warning and a wild yell from the half-blood driver.

The following instant there was a fearful crash, and the young lovers were violently

torn apart, while the bursting of a million lights was followed by blank darkness for Spotter Bob!

CHAPTER XIII.

OLD GHOST TAKES THE LEAD.

"WHAT'S the matter with me?"

The question broke from the lips of the young Spotter when he recovered his senses and found himself stretched on a hospital cot.

"The boy is all right now," declared the attendant physician. "It was nothing serious after all—simply a heavy concussion."

"Never swore in my life, an' nobody has a right to say I was cussin'," protested Bob as he struggled to get up.

"Lie down a while!" directed the nurse, pushing him gently back. "You are in no condition to get up now."

"Ain't? Jimminy keezer! w'at's ther matter with me?"

"You were injured."

"Was? When?—Where? What happened? House fall on me—or which?"

"You were thrown from a cab and stunned."

"Stun'd, was I? Jest show me the kid w'at shied ther stun? I'll do him up instanter!"

"You were knocked senseless."

"Was he a good shot? Hit me on the head—not? What's his name? Where's he reside? Show me to him? I'm Business Bob from Philadelfy, an' I'll crawl up his collar!"

"That's all right—"

"Mebbe you think so, but I don't. I've got a rep to sustain. I'm goin' out to look after that kid!"

"You were thrown from a runaway cab and rendered senseless when you struck the paving."

"Runaway cab—thrown out—knocked out! I begin to remember, thought it's hazy. The seenyaw—the Injun—Little Nell! We had a racket, an'—"

"His mind seems to wander," said the nurse to the physician.

"Don't you stack any chips on that! My mind is jest gettin' oiled up an' in runnin' order. I remember now—we was in the cab, an' that wild Injun was drivin'. There was a clang of bells—yells—crash—and then—What happened then?"

"The cab was overturned by a fire engine," explained the physician.

"Sure, Mike!" excitedly exclaimed Bob. "I remember takin' ther dump, and then I remember—nuthin'. Who was killed? Where is little Nell?"

"The girl?"

"Yes."

"She was not hurt—only dazed."

"But where is she?"

"A man took her away."

"Who? What man?"

"I did not see him, but I understand it was her guardian."

"Not the seenyaw—say it wasn't the seenyaw?"

"I do not know who it was."

Bob Braddock was up before they could stop him.

"I've gotter go!" he cried. "Don't stop me! I'm all right. Head feels fu'st—straight." This despite the fact that for the moment his head was whirling round and round and he was seized with sudden blindness.

"Where do you live, boy?" questioned the physician.

"On the Bowery," was the prompt reply.

"Well, I guess you can go home."

"Course I kin! I feel bully. Show me the way out. I'm in a rush—lots of business on hand."

But, there were certain formalities to go through before he could get out. These were soon attended to, and the Spotter found

himself on the street, a bandage about his head, but not much the worse for the rattling adventure through which he had just passed.

Another night was approaching, as he swiftly made his way down the Bowery.

"Goin' ter find out if little Nell's ter home. Mebbe it was her grandfather that took her away. Hopeso. Great jee! W'at if she's dropped inter ther dirty hands of Murella ag'in! Wow! I can't bear ter think of such luck!"

"Seems like I dreamed her an' I was stuck on each other. It couldn't be so! What'd she care fer a feller like me! Guess I must have got that inter my head while I was laid out in ther hospital."

Straight to the house of little Nell he proceeded, and by the time he arrived there, the street lamps were gleaming.

Up the stairs he bounded, rapping loudly at the door.

As there was no answer, he could not wait to rap again, but tried the door.

It opened, and he entered.

The room was deserted, and neither little Nell nor her grandfather were anywhere about the place!

"That settles it!" exclaimed Bob, his heart sinking. "She's still in ther hands of her foes!"

As he was on the point of leaving, the door opened and a man staggered into the room. He did not seem surprised at finding the Spotter there, but mechanically lighted a lamp, after which he dropped heavily into a chair, his head falling forward on his breast.

He was Nell's grandfather, and his entire aspect told the story of his hopeless woe.

"Little Nell—" began Bob.

"She must be dead!" groaned the old man.

"Dead? No! She was all right this day."

"She was? How do you know?"

"Found her—talked with her."

"When? Where?" The old man had started to his feet and stood trembling before the boy.

In as few words as possible, the Spotter told of his adventure. Although the listener was filled with dismay, he declared Bob a noble fellow. He was some what encouraged to know his grandchild still lived and was not injured in the accident brought about by the reckless driving of the wild half-blood who had captured the cab.

However, the thought that Little Nell might again be in the power of Felipe Murella was maddening.

What could be done to save her? Once more all trace of her was lost.

"Why should that wretch turn his spite on my poor child?" cried the old man, wringing his hands. "Was he not satisfied with the terrible injury he has done us?"

"Nothin' satisfies a crooked Spaniard."

"If I was sure he murdered her father—"

"What?"

"Bartley Spaulding should be avenged!"

"Well, you kin be sure of it!"

"How?"

"I know it."

"How do you know anything about it?"

Then Bob told of his first meeting with the Spaniard and how he had tracked the Man from Mexico and Sonora Dan to the room in the lodging-house of the night-hawkers, where he overheard enough to know Nell's father had been kept a captive in some kind of an underground dungeon until death came to his relief.

"Oh, the dastard!" grated old Thomas Howard, his whole figure shaking with emotion. "Why didn't he kill poor Bartley at once?"

"Dunno."

"No one but a wretch would have shut a man up like that to die!"

"He must have done it fer revenge. They say a Spaniard will do anything to git square with a man he hates."

"Without doubt you are right. If I only had a little more proof, I could bring the man to justice. If I was rich, I could obtain justice! But I am poor! The police scarcely credit my story of Little Nell's abduction; they seem to think me out of my head. Even if I could get them enlisted in my behalf, Murella might baffle me, for he has papers that seem to give him the guardianship of my granddaughter."

"That is why he is so bold about his crooked work," said Bob. "He does not fear you."

"He fears no man!"

"I am not sure of that. I reckon he's kinder skeery of Sonora Dan an' ther Injun. If not, he'd never try to skip them the way he does."

"It may turn to be a case of dog eat dog. If so, there is a chance Little Nell will be saved. If he harms a hair of that innocent child's head, I'll kill him!"

"Killin' is dangerous."

"I'll kill him though I give up my life in turn!" burst from the lips of the passion-shaken old man. "The only thing that will save him is his treatment of that child!"

"That's right!" broke in a hollow voice. "Kill him! He killed me!"

The old man and the boy were startled to see the person Bob had designated as Old Ghost come tottering into the room.

"Oh, it is good to find a light!" faltered the miserable wretch. "I am so afraid of the dark! Will you tell me why a dead man should fear the dark? Nobody seems able to tell me that. When I ask them, they look at me in a singular manner, and hurry away."

He sat down on a chair, carrying his trembling hands to his head.

"What brought me here?" he muttered.

"I came for something. What?"

Old Howard was so occupied with his own misery that he scarcely gave the man of the ghastly face a look.

Old Ghost seemed struggling to remember something, and, after a time, he cried:

"That's it! that's it!—the girl!"

"What girl?" demanded Spotter Bob and Thomas Howard, in unison.

"The one who brought me here to give me something to eat when I was so hungry. Oh, she has a kind heart! That wretch shall not harm her!"

"What do you know of her?"

"I saw her—I saw her with him!"

The Spotter had the old man by the shoulder in a moment, as he shouted:

"When? Where?"

"Not far away. He took her down the alley and up to that room. I watched and watched till it grew dark there, and I was frightened."

Howard was now more excited than Bob.

"Can you take us theré?" he asked wildly.

"That is why I came here. Will you follow?"

"Yes! Lead the way!"

"Easy!" cautioned the boy. "Have you a gun, Mr. Howard?"

"I have a revolver."

"Loaded?"

"Yes."

"Take it, and be ready to use it instanter. If we do find the critter, he may make a fight of it."

The old man looked to his revolver, and declared it was in working order.

A few moments later, the strange trio was moving along the Bowery.

As Old Ghost had said, they did not have to go far before they came to the alley, into which he declared the Spaniard had taken Little Nell. It was a dark and wretched place, and the man of the ghastly face hesitated about going down there. His companions urged him on, however, and they entered.

They moved forward cautiously, for it was impossible to tell what they would en-

counter in the darkness of the miserable place.

How it happened neither of them could tell, but, all at once, their guide vanished as completely and mysteriously as if he had been a ghost in truth!

CHAPTER XIV.

THROUGH THE WINDOW IN THE ROOF.

In a wretched garret room, lighted during the day by a roof window, were Senor Felipe Murella, of Mexico, and Little Nell, the lost heiress.

The girl was seated on a chair, while Felipe stood in the middle of the floor, his feet planted wide apart, admiring the fresh and fascinating beauty of the child he had kidnapped. There was a gloating look on his evil face, and his fingers moved as if he longed to grasp her.

"So you want to go back to your grandfaze, ha?" he questioned.

"If you please, sir," said Little Nell, in a rather dazed way, as if she scarcely understood what she was saying.

"Dat old rascale keep you from me. I be de friend of your fazare; he make me de guardian of you. Ven your fazare lose all he haf in de mine an' bee seek to die, he make me promeese to take his shild an' do for her like she vas my own. I gif heem dat promeese. Your grandfaze keep you from me. I haf money; I can make you reech."

"I do not care for money! I only want my grandfather. Please let me go!"

"Leetle fool!" muttered the Spaniard, beneath his breath. "Why I bodare vid her? Vonce I say I do eet to haf revenge on her fadare. How I hate dat man! He catch me try to cheat. Ve haf vords; he strike me! Ha! I make heem pay for dat! Now, I haf found dis girl, I haf de paper v'at I make heem write. By dat paper de girl ees mine teel she be twenty-von. V'at I want of her? Ah! she be pritee!"

It was evident the beauty of the child had aroused the worst passions of the man's nature, and Little Nell was indeed in terrible peril.

"Please, sir, will you take me home?" she pleaded, once more.

"I veel gif her some more of de drug," muttered Felipe. "Eef I don't, she get so she cry an' take on." Aloud, he replied:

"I veel take you to your grandfaze vera soon. You be not strong now. I gif you somet'ing to make you haf de strength."

"Oh, I do not want anything!" I only want to go home! That is all!"

Murella procured a glass of water, and, with his back turned to Nell, dropped a small amount of a colorless liquid into it from a tiny vial he carried. Then he approached her, saying:

"You dreenk dis first."

She drew back, with a gesture of fear.

"I don't want it!"

"You teenk you don't want eet, but you do! Eef you don't dreenk, I veel not take you to your grandfaze."

"And you will if I do?"

"Yes."

"Right away?"

"Right away off qveek."

"Then I will drink it."

She took the glass from his hand and drank from it, but stopped suddenly, a look of repulsion on her face.

"It is a little bitter!" she cried. "Why should water be bitter?"

"I put dat stuff in eet to gif you de strength."

Her eyes began to droop, and she murmured: "Oh, I am so tired—so sleepy!"

"Den you lay right away down here," and he half-carried her to a couch, on which she sunk in a heavy slumber, so quickly had the subtle drug worked.

"Dat ees goot!" cried the triumphant villain. "She veel sleep for several hour, and

ven she vake, she do not remembare she want to go home so qveek. Ha! Dat ees great stuff!"

"She be vera sveet, like de flower. I keep her now—I keep her for herself, safe! Ven she is oldare—ha!—she be vera handsome! Den she veel belong de whole to Felipe Murella, of Mexico."

"I must find a vay to geet rid of dem dog-a v'at I haf to do de job for her fazare. Dey haf de poware over me—dey could crush me! I hire de vite man, but he gif de Injun half to vatch ofer de man in de cave. And dere Bartlee Spauldeeng stay teel he die."

"Dat Injun, heem I do be afraid of! He keel an scalp de man v'at I offar two hundred dollar to geet rid of dem bote. He haf de vay like de cat. Nevare tell vere he be or ven he—*Carr-r-ramba!*"

There was a sudden crash of glass above, and then a black figure dropped lightly down into the room from the broken window in the roof.

Injun Jack stood before Felipe Murella! The half-blood folded his arms across his breast and looked steadily, ominously at the man who a moment before had been admiring the fresh beauty of the girl he had kidnapped.

The Spaniard was so startled that he fell back, pale and shaking, glaring at the half-blood as if he saw a spirit.

Not a word did Injun Jack speak, but his eyes were filled with a terrible menace.

For almost a minute the tableau lasted, and then, with a furious cry, Felipe snatched out a revolver.

"Dog-a!" he snarled. "You track me here! Den you shall die!"

But, as he lifted the weapon, something caused him to hesitate and halt, even though the half-blood made no move to defend his own life.

From the window above, a stern voice rung out:

"Hold hard, thar, Murella! I have ther drop on yer, an' I'll perforate yer hide with a lead pill ef ye don't drop that yar gun *instantly!*"

Felipe looked up, and, at the window, he saw the face of Sonora Dan. The light glittered on the barrel of a revolver held in the steady hand of the Westerner, and Dan could plant his bullets exactly where he pleased.

Then the Spaniard began to feel alarmed, for he perceived he was really in a tight box. Evidently those men had come there to settle accounts with him, and they meant business.

"Drop that yar gun!" roared Sonora Dan.

The revolver fell to the floor, and the half-blood coolly picked it up.

Then Sonora Dan followed his red pard into the room.

"Waal, Felipe, old pard, how are yer!" he saluted grinning in a way that enraged the Spaniard thoroughly. "Tried ter give us ther slip, eh? Waal, ye can't dodge Injun Jack, an' ye may as well know thet fu'st as last. He trailed ye hyer, an' then he brung me along ter have a talk with yer. He ain't much on the chin, but *he's mighty handy on the go!*"

"Why you come here?" demanded the Man from Mexico, in ugly mood.

"To get that settlement with you, old hoss."

"I nevare pay you any more monee!"

"Oh, yes yer will!"

"Nevare! I pay you to keep Bartlee Spauldeeng shut up in de cave; dat vas all. You keep heem dare and geet your monee teel he be dead. Dat end de beesnez."

"Not by a blamed big heap, pard! Now, ther man's dead you ain't satisfied. You hev stolen his gal, an' I reckon I know why. It can't be fer money, as you hed ther thing fixed so far as that was concerned."

"You know too much!"

"Thet thar's 'bout right, pard; I know too much for *your* comfort, a heap sight. But,

w'at ef I told yer Bartley Spaulding was *not* dead?"

Felipe sneered.

"You nevare make me believe dat now you haf say he be dead."

Not one of the three saw a ghastly white face that appeared at the broken window at this moment. And the man at the window was unaware two other persons were a short distance away on the roof, closely watching his every move.

"Jack," spoke Sonora Dan, "did Bartley Spaulding die in the cave?"

"No die."

Still Felipe sneered.

"Why did you tell me dat?" he questioned. "Eet ees too late now. You say he be deat, and den you change your storee. Eet nevar go vid me."

Sonora Dan grinned.

"It may *hev* ter go, pard. Jack?"

The half-blood grunted.

"What became of Bartley Spaulding?"

"Dig out—glt away."

"That ees too thin!" declared Felipe.

"Where ees he now?"

"Here!"

Down from the roof window shot another man, and then Old Ghost stood there before the astounded trio!

No longer he was shaking—no longer he seemed weak and trembling.

He stood up straight as a statue before them, a terrible look in the eyes which were turned on Felipe Murella.

"I remember now!" he cried. "I am Bartley Spaulding! I thought I was dead, but now I know I live—*live* for vengeance!"

"Great God!" gasped Sonora Dan, falling back. "It *is* ther critter for sure!"

"Vengeance!" cried the man of the ghastly face, shaking his clinched fists above his head. "Vengeance is mine!"

And then, as he launched himself toward the Spaniard, Sonora Dan lifted his revolver and fired!

CHAPTER XV.

FELIPE'S FATE AND NELL'S FORTUNE.

FORWARD on his face plunged Old Ghost, and there he lay like one dead, while three pale-faced men stared at the prostrate figure.

Sonora Dan was the first to speak.

"Just creased ther critter!" he cried.

"An' I'm derved ef it ain't Spaulding!"

Injun Jack turned the body with his foot, and, as he did so, an unexpected thing happened.

Up leaped the man who had fallen before the Western ruffian's stunning shot, snatching Murella's revolver from the half-blood's hand.

"It is my turn!" he shouted.

The weapon spoke, and Sonora Dan, desperado and murderer, went down without a cry.

Felipe would have been the next victim, but he suddenly extinguished the light, plunging the room in utter darkness.

At the window in the roof Spotter Bob and old Tom Howard had witnessed a portion of the startling events taking place below. They had lost Old Ghost in the alley, but it was not long before they saw Sonora Dan and Injun Jack slip past and hurry away. Following the two ruffians they beheld a crouching figure that appeared familiar, and they followed. Up a flight of dark stairs to the roof they were led, and there saw the man of the ghastly face drop into the room containing the trio of rascals.

"They've doused ther glim!" whispered Bob, in old Howard's ear. "There's been shootin', an' somebody was socked fer keeps."

"Little Nell is down there!" cried the old man. "I am going to her!"

The boy tried to hold him back, but the grandfather dropped through the window with the sprightliness of a lad of twenty.

"I sticks ter my pard's!" and Bob also dropped into the room below.

The boy expected a fearful struggle would follow, but nothing of the kind happened. All was silent within the room, and old Howard soon struck a match, with which he lighted the lamp.

Then they looked around.

On the floor lay Sonora Dan, stone dead!

Felipe Murella, Injun Jack and the man who had shot the Western ruffian were gone.

An open door told how they had slipped from the place.

On the couch lay Little Nell, the lost heiress, sleeping as peacefully as if there had been no sounds to arouse her. The drug administered by Murella had rendered her unconscious of the thrilling scenes which transpired in that room.

With a cry of joy, the grandfather caught her up in his arms, kissing her tenderly, and then glared around defiantly, as he exclaimed:

"Safe! They shall not take you from me again, pet!"

"Well, they'll have to climb over Robert Braddock, Esq., if they do!" affirmed the boy Spotter.

"Where have they gone?" questioned the old man.

"Skipped; an' we'd better skip, too. There's no knowin' w'en they'll come rustlin' back."

"That man on the floor—"

"Is dead as old Pharo—dead fer keeps!"

"It looks like murder!"

"It ain't none of our funeral, an' we don't want ter be round w'en der perlice gets er-long. Come on."

Outside the door they found a ladder leading up to an open sky-light, and from below they heard the sound of excited voices.

"Somebody's comin'!" whispered the wary Bob. "We don't want ter be seen! Up ther ladder ter the roof! We'll git down from ther roof the same way we got up there."

Carrying the girl with surprising ease, old Howard mounted the ladder, and the boy followed.

The following morning New York was treated to another horrifying sensation.

Felipe Murella, of Mexico, was found dead in a wretched alley. He had been killed by a knife-thrust, but that was not what created the sensation.

The Spaniard's scalp had been taken!

"Jack the Scalper again!" was the scare-heading used in one morning paper, and the report which follow stated that there was, without doubt, another murderous crank turned loose on New York, as robbery did not seem to have been the object of the assassin, none of Murella's money or valuables having been taken.

"That was the work of the Injun," promptly decided Spotter Bob, when he read the account of the affair. "Little Nell's enemy will not trouble her again."

Little Nell herself smiled at him from the opposite side of the breakfast-table, at which they were seated.

"It has not ended so badly, after all," she said; "and I have found one dear friend, as well as lost an enemy."

"Scuse my blushes!" entreated Bob, and he actually did blush, something remarkable for him.

The old man looked uneasily from the boy to the girl, shaking his head, as he muttered to himself:

"Too young! And the lad's scarcely more than a street urchin. It will never do—never do!"

For the moment he forgot that many of the smartest and most prosperous business men in this country were once "street urchins." The life of the streets, when it does not make a tough or a crook of a boy, sharpens a lad's wits, gives him confidence in himself, shows him how to get along in the

world and look out for Number One. It is an education of a sort acquired in no other manner.

Bob was painfully aware of his deficiencies in book knowledge and refined manners and had resolved to remedy the matter as far as possible by attending night school.

"There is one mystery I would like solved," said Nell's grandfather, after a time. "I am wondering who that old man of the ghostly face can be, and how he was connected with Murella and his tools."

In time, that question was answered, for Howard received a long letter from El Altar, Mexico, and that letter was written by Bartley Spaulding, who was alive and well! He had, as we have seen, not died in the cavern dungeon where he was confined through the treachery of Felipe Murella, but, as the Indian had stated, had dug out and escaped, although what he had suffered during those horrible years had changed him to an old and broken-down man and had so affected his mind that he fancied he was dead.

The fortunate discovery of a gold nugget pocket had enabled him to raise money to get to New York, to which place he was drawn by an impulse he did not understand. There he wandered about the streets in a half dazed condition, falling in with the characters of this story in the manner described.

The truth of it all finally dawned upon him as he overheard the words of the villains in the room below while he gazed down through the broken roof-window. Then he fully realized that he was the Bartley Spaulding of whom they were speaking and at once sought vengeance on the men who had wrecked his life.

In the darkness after the extinguishing of the light, he followed Murella and the half-blood from the room, but lost them in the streets.

The next morning he read of Murella's death, and, making a lucky find of a lost pocketbook, he hurried back to Mexico to see if he could possibly prove his identity and recover his right to the Little Nell Mine. In this he had succeeded, after a severe struggle, and once more was a wealthy man.

He had not sought his child when in New York for the reason that he knew he would shock her by his appearance, and also doubted if he could convince her that he really was her own father. Now able to prove his identity, and having regained his health in a great measure, he would soon hasten to his child.

The letter contained several drafts on a New York bank, enabling Little Nell and her grandfather Howard to immediately leave their wretched rooms on the Bowery and seek more comfortable quarters.

"This knocks me out!" decided Bob Braddock, sadly. "I ain't in it after this!"

"What do you mean?"

"Well, now you're rich I don't s'pose you'll care to have me come round any more where you are?"

Little Nell promptly resented this, and the boy was forced to beg her pardon. Then she impulsively threw her arms about his neck and kissed him, whispering in his ear:

"I have not forgotten that day in the cab!"

And Bob was happy once more!

"Jack the Scalper" was not captured by the police. The half-blood disappeared from New York, and it is probable he returned to the Southwest.

The police made little effort to solve the mystery of Sonora Dan's death. The man was a stranger, and very evidently was a tough; so the mystery of his taking off did not seem to them worth the time and trouble to solve it.

Little Nell lived in a home of her own now, and her father, having disposed of his

mining interests, is with her, as is also her dear old grandfather, whom she most tenderly loves.

Bob Braddock is office boy for a big Wall street broking firm, and says he means to become a money king, some day. As he is bright and alert, there is no telling what may happen!

He attends night school steadily, and is advancing rapidly. That he is always warmly welcomed to the home of Little Nell needs no further proof than that old Tommy calls him "my boy!"

THE END.

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98 William Street, New York.